

Spring 1961

\$1.50

APR 21 1961

LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

# CRITICISM

*a quarterly for literature and the arts*

## ARTICLES BY

THOMAS MUNRO ON PHILOSOPHIES OF ART  
HISTORY

R. E. HUGHES ON GEORGE HERBERT'S RHETORICAL  
WORLD

D. L. FARLEY-HILLS ON DR. LEAVIS' CRITICAL  
APOLOGIA

EDWARD ENGELBERG ON PICTURE AND GESTURE  
IN THE YEATSIAN AESTHETIC

D. S. BLAND ON BACKGROUND DESCRIPTION IN  
THE NOVEL

ELEANOR McCANN ON PHILOSOPHY AND MYTH IN  
HARDY'S "RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

*Reviews by Frederick W. Sternfeld, Van Meter Ames, Alexander  
Sackton, Walton Litz, and Jay Martin*

*Published for the*

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

*by the*

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

# CRITICISM

*a quarterly for literature and the arts*

CRITICISM is designed to advance the study of literature and the other arts; it is a medium for the scholarly explication and evaluation of artists and their works. Formal aesthetics and the more technical studies in philology and linguistics are not within its scope. It will examine the arts and literatures of all periods and nations, either individually or in their inter-relationships, and critical theory regarding them.

## *Editor*

Herbert M. Schueller

## *Associate Editors*

Robert F. Gleckner

Robert L. Peters

## *Book Review Editor*

Emerson R. Marks

## *Managing Editor*

Samuel A. Golden

## *Assistant Editors*

B. B. Ashcom

A. Dayle Wallace

Ernst Scheyer

Bernard Goldman

Ruth Wylie

Graduate Staff, Department of English

## *Advisory Board*

F. W. Bateson

Gustave Reese

Henry Nash Smith

Northrop Frye

Arnold G. Reichenberger

William K. Wimsatt

Thomas Munro

Edgar P. Richardson

Morton Dauwen Zabel

---

PRICE: \$6.00 a year, \$11.00 for two years, \$16.00 for three years; add \$.15 a year in Canada, \$.35 a year abroad; single numbers \$1.50. Send subscriptions direct to Wayne State University Press.

Published quarterly in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall by Wayne State University Press, 5980 Cass Avenue, Detroit 2, Michigan.

*Second class mail privileges authorized at Detroit, Michigan.*

Copyright, 1961, Wayne State University Press



C  
a q  
vol

Phil  
Geo  
Dr.  
Pict

Enc  
Blir

*Mu*

*Th*

*Da*

*An*

*Re*

*Th*  
*prin*

# CRITICISM

*a quarterly for literature and the arts*

*volume III, number 2 · spring 1961*

---

## Contents

Philosophies of Art History	Thomas Munro	75
George Herbert's Rhetorical World	R. E. Hughes	86
Dr. Leavis' Critical Apologia	D. L. Farley-Hills	95
Picture and Gesture in the Yeatsian Aesthetic	Edward Engelberg	101
Endangering the Reader's Neck: Background Description in the Novel	D. S. Bland	121
Blind Will or Blind Hero: Philosophy and Myth in Hardy's <i>Return of the Native</i>	Eleanor McCann	140

## Book Reviews

<i>Music in Mediaeval Britain</i> by Frank Ll. Harrison; <i>The Fugue in Beethoven's Piano Music</i> by John V. Cockshoot; and <i>William Lawes</i> by Murray Lefkowitz (Vols. I, II, and III respectively of <i>Studies in the History of Music</i> , edited by Egon Wellesz)	Frederick W. Sternfeld	158
<i>The Dilemma of Being Modern: Essays on Art and Literature</i> by J. P. Hodin	Van Meter Ames	161
<i>Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory</i> by Edwin Honig	Alexander Sackton	162
<i>Anna Livia Plurabelle: The Making of a Chapter</i> , edited by Fred H. Higginson	Walton Litz	164
<i>Reflections on a Literary Revolution</i> by Graham Hough	Jay Martin	168

*This journal was designed by Richard Kinney, set in Janson and Libra type faces, printed on Warren's Old Style Antique and Beckett Cover, and manufactured in the United States of America.*

CRITICISM invites you and your colleagues to submit for consideration manuscripts of customary journal-article length in the fields of literature, music and the fine arts.

Address manuscripts to: Professor Herbert M. Schueller, Chairman, Department of English, Wayne State University, Detroit 2, Michigan.

### *Forthcoming Articles*

James Schroeter, "The Four Fathers: Symbolism in 'Oedipus Rex'"

Thomas R. Whitaker, "Lawrence's Western Path: 'Mornings in Mexico'"

William Bowman Piper, "Tristram Shandy's Tragicomical Testimony"

William Bysshe Stein, "'Billy Budd': The Nightmare of History"

Ph

T  
espe  
as o  
fact  
used  
turi  
cult

I  
erro  
the  
erro  
with  
as a  
an o  
phil  
velo  
info  
in th  
per

T  
histo  
fash  
revi  
has  
app  
V  
bran  
mo  
abo

•  
1945  
lect  
univ  
Mus  
1  
Bro

## *Philosophies of Art History*<sup>1</sup>

The philosophy of history has been in some disfavor among scholars, especially in America, for several decades. It has been widely attacked as obsolete and discredited, impossible to deal with in terms of objective facts. Its opponents have also denounced a number of the concepts used by philosophers of history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—especially those of “progress” and “evolution.” Theories of cultural evolution in the field of art have been especially under fire.

I believe that these attacks, while justified to some extent by previous errors, have been carried much too far. It has been a mistake to identify the whole philosophical approach to history with certain particular, erroneous theories in the field. These can be rejected or corrected without abandoning the task as a whole. The philosophy of history, as a general subject, implies no particular theory, true or false. It is an open field for investigation, a line of inquiry which has attracted philosophic minds in all ages, especially since modern man has developed so strong an interest in his own history and so much detailed information about it. Under one name or another, philosophic minds in the future will insist on pursuing that line of inquiry as far as the data permit.

The arts have occupied a prominent place in past philosophies of history, and in this field too the philosophic approach has been out of fashion in recent decades. But signs are not lacking of a cautious revival of interest in it. This is partly due to the belief that art history has become too highly specialized and is in need of a more synthetic approach.

What is the philosophy of history? It is sometimes regarded as a branch of philosophy; sometimes as a kind of history-writing. As a modern subject, it overlaps both philosophy and history, so that books about it may be classed under either heading. It undertakes to study

\* Thomas Munro, editor of the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* since 1945 and author of many books and articles on art and aesthetics, has taught and lectured on art, economics, psychology, aesthetics, and philosophy at various universities. Since 1931 he has been Curator of Education at the Cleveland Museum of Art and Professor of Art at Western Reserve University.

<sup>1</sup> Presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Aesthetics in Brooklyn, New York, on October 27, 1960.

the whole course of human history or some large section of it, such as modern Western civilization, and to generalize about the basic nature of events therein. The term "history," in this broad sense, includes the prehistoric and the protohistoric as well as the strictly historic periods for which written records are available. It is applied both to the events themselves and to verbal accounts of them: that is, to historiography or history-writing. The philosopher of history tries to find out whether there are, in human events, any pervasive, controlling laws, tendencies, or patterns. He looks in world history for major trends, sequences, and stages, for underlying causal factors.

A philosophy of history is a particular theory along these lines, like that of Hegel or Spencer. Most books which are classed as such undertake to discuss the whole course of human events: not in detail, but as to its main trends and explanatory principles. However, vast scope alone does not entitle a book to be called a philosophy of history. An "outline of world history," which merely lists or superficially narrates events in chronological order, would not qualify. On the other hand, a book may cover a relatively small period, as did Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, and take on philosophic character through the depth and cogency with which it interrelates, interprets, and explains events in that time and place. It may show significant analogies, recurrences, and causal connections among events in different fields, such as the socio-economic, religious, intellectual, and artistic. Even so, it would not fully qualify as a philosophy of history unless it tried to show how the facts within its special field were related to history in general; perhaps as typical of common tendencies. A book on the philosophy of history may not actually narrate particular events at all; it may confine itself to a theoretical discussion of the nature of history and the problems involved in explaining it.<sup>2</sup> Or it may be a history of theories of history, as in Robert Flint's *History of the Philosophy of History in France* (New York, 1894), J. B. Bury's *The Idea of Progress* (London, 1920), and Herman Schneider's *Philosophie der Geschichte* (Breslau, 1923).

The term "historiology," long in Webster's unabridged as a "rare" word, is now coming into wider technical use. Though defined simply as "the study or knowledge of history," it now refers mainly to the

<sup>2</sup> As, for example, in Morris R. Cohen's *The Meaning of Human History* (La Salle, Ill., 1947). *Theories of History*, ed. by Patrick Gardiner (Glencoe, Ill., 1959), is an anthology of selections from philosophic and scientific theories of history.

*theoretical* study of history, rather than to the ordinary learning and narrating of particular events. A book of this sort may deal theoretically with history as a whole or with some part of it, such as the history of art or of Greece. Or it may deal only with an abstract theoretical problem such as "historical explanation."<sup>3</sup>

A philosophy of *art* history selects one main set of threads in the total fabric of events—a certain art or group of arts—and tries to study them in some of the ways just mentioned. (The term "art" is used here in its broad aesthetic sense, to include not only the visual arts but also literature, music, and theater arts.) The historian tries to follow this set of threads through successive periods and different places, describing its main trends and stages, and explaining them as best he can. Thus to follow a particular thread, or (to change the figure) a constituent stream within the total flow of history, necessitates detaching it from its context, ignoring or minimizing most of the other factors with which it interacted along the way. The historian may do so to a greater or less extent, and this itself tends to imply a certain theory of causation on his part. To ignore or minimize outside factors to a great extent usually implies that events in art are largely caused by factors within art itself, or by factors which are basic in human nature, rather than by social, geographical, or other external factors. Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (New York, 1932) and Henri Focillon's *La Vie des Formes* (New York, 1948) are of this type, whereas Taine's *Philosophy of Art* (New York, 1875) and Arnold Hauser's *The Philosophy of Art History* (London, 1959) put more emphasis on external factors. None of these books undertakes to narrate the particular events of art history. On the other hand, Hauser's *Social History of Art* is a narrative, not a philosophy of art history, although it has a strong theoretical emphasis. It is impossible, of course, to draw a sharp line between these closely related types of scholarship. There are also theoretical histories of other branches of civilization, such as religion, social organization, and science; and in each of these the historian selects a different train of events to trace and explain in his own way.

Modern philosophers of history usually try to base their theories on established facts, so far as possible. But they venture beyond the limits of such knowledge into far-reaching hypotheses which can not, as yet,

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Patrick Gardiner, *The Nature of Historical Explanation* (London, 1952) and Arthur Child, "Thoughts on the Historiology of Neo-Positivism," *Journal of Philosophy*, LVII (1960), 665.

be fully supported by empirical evidence. In this tendency to bold speculation, with all its risks of error, they are carrying on a traditional role of philosophy. Since the Greeks first showed him how, man has always insisted on looking ahead, beyond the solid, clearly lighted ground of present knowledge, to speculate on what may lie beyond.

Some theories of history claim to be scientific, and some historians class the study of history as a social science. Others insist that history-writing is not and can not be a science in the full sense of the word. They point to such obstacles as these: (a) the comparative "uniqueness" of human events; (b) the complexity of historical causation; (c) the impossibility of adequate observation, experiment, and measurement; (d) the inevitability of subjective bias on the historian's part. When the historian deals with such complex and often intangible phenomena as those of art, a scientific treatment of it is especially hard, if not impossible.

Nevertheless, it is possible in history-writing, as in aesthetics, to make some steps toward scientific method. One can at least try to base one's theories on whatever direct, verifiable evidence exists at the time, and to frame hypotheses which are reasonably consistent with scientific conceptions of the universe and man. A theory of this sort should not be condemned in advance along with ancient mythologies and fictions based on *a priori* metaphysics. Having been warned of the dangers of wishful thinking and monumental system-building, the historian can try to be moderately objective and cautious. But a philosophy of history must necessarily—at least at this stage of the game—be somewhat like trying to assemble a jig-saw puzzle of which one possesses only a few parts, then trying to imagine how the picture as a whole would look. Moreover, the player in this case can not be sure that the pieces belong to any one unified picture. Even as fragments they keep changing, and new, surprising ones keep appearing before his eyes.

Why has the philosophy of history been in such disfavor? There are many contributing factors. At times, it would seem, the intellectual and cultural situation is right for producing large, comprehensive syntheses of thought; at other times, for avoiding them and gathering more data. Large systems in all branches of philosophy have been unpopular in the last few decades, especially in America, which is apparently less inclined than Europe toward philosophic systems; more toward pluralism and specialization. In historical scholarship, the reaction has been especially strong because of disappointment with the

grandiose philosophies of history which appeared in the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Outstanding among these were Condorcet's essay on human progress, Comte's "law of three stages," Hegel's theory of the development of the cosmic mind, Spencer's "universal law of evolution," Taine's theory of race, environment, and moment, the "unilinear" evolutionism of L. H. Morgan and E. Tylor, and Spengler's "decline of the West." In reacting against these, American scholars have been tempted into equally excessive hostility toward the philosophy of history in general, especially in the arts. It has been persistently confused with the partly erroneous doctrines of Hegel, Spencer, Marx, and others. Even when their names are not explicitly mentioned, the context usually shows that the author has one of them in mind as a horrible example of what the philosophy of history must necessarily be.

Much the same can be said about the concepts of evolution and progress, although they stand for more specific theories in the field. As abstract concepts, they are highly ambiguous. They have been defined in various ways by various philosophers, some of which imply theories long since abandoned, while others are consistent with present scientific opinion. Discussions of them in art history, philosophy, and social science are sadly confused by semantic difficulties. Like the philosophy of history, the concepts of evolution and progress are far from dead. They have been much too carelessly dismissed as mere discredited Victorian illusions. If properly redefined in the light of present knowledge, they can still be useful tools of theoretical discussion.

It is evident today that all past philosophies of history were oversimplified and partly false. They attributed to the course of human events more regularity and uniform causation than is now credible. Some of them claimed to have discovered a single, all-inclusive law or formula for history, such as Spencer's "law" of evolution as increasing complexity. Marxism also, in the opinion of non-communist scholars, oversimplified cultural evolution by attributing too much to socio-economic factors and the class struggle. There has recently been a welcome revival of interest in the philosophy of art history, mainly in the form of Marxist and other sociological approaches. This includes a belief in cultural evolution, which the Marxists have never abandoned. Because of the extreme, atomistic specialization of most Western art historians, the Marxists stand out by contrast as among the few who offer a more unified, comprehensive account of artistic phenomena,

including the history of styles. This situation is pleasing to the Marxists themselves, who are not modest in claiming that theirs is the only sociological approach and the only scientific theory of history worthy of the name.

It is a serious mistake to identify cultural evolutionism in general, or the philosophy of history as a perennial field of inquiry, with any of these inadequate theories. To advance a theory in the philosophy of history does not imply that one is committed in advance to some overly regular, monistic type of explanation. Conceivably, one may hold that there is no order, pattern, or continuity whatever in human events, that all is chaos and utter diversity. Or one can accept a more moderate pluralism, holding that some approximate, irregular patterns are discernible, that analogies and recurrent sequences do occur, but not in exactly the same way everywhere.

My plea is not for any one theory in particular, and I have none to offer in this paper. I plead only for a more active and unprejudiced reconsideration of the whole subject, with especial reference to the arts. This should involve a critical review of the major hypotheses proposed in the past hundred years, and a renewal of investigation in the light of our greatly increased knowledge about the details of art history. Young historians with a flair for theory should no longer be frightened away from it and forced into microscopic speculation. During recent decades a wealth of material for theory has been gathered; not merely unrelated details, but also general facts of moderate scope. Historians of the arts have pointed out significant groupings, sequences, and partial analogies which call for systematic treatment: for example, the so-called "Baroque" styles in different arts and different cultures, widely separated in time and place. No large-scale attempt at a philosophic history of world art has appeared in the West in recent years, with the possible exception of Malraux's *Voices of Silence*, which has proven disappointing in many respects.

Anthropology is a subject with much greater claim to scientific status than either aesthetics or art history, and it has considerable prestige in the United States and Europe. Recent opinion in that subject has helped to influence American art historians against the philosophy of history in general and cultural evolutionism in particular. Several of the nineteenth-century philosophies of history, mentioned above, dealt with anthropology. They attempted a reconstruction of the stages in prehistoric and early historic culture, including the arts, and a comparison of prehistoric culture with that of contemporary primitive

peoples. A close analogy was drawn between the prehistoric and contemporary primitives, with the inference that the latter were merely our "belated ancestors" and quite similar to prehistoric peoples. L. H. Morgan and Tylor influenced nineteenth-century thought through their conception of a highly regular type of cultural evolution which followed everywhere much the same path, the same sequence of stages, although at different speeds. It conceived of cultural evolution, including that of art, as a unilinear path of similar steps everywhere. The resemblances among different peoples were exaggerated and the diversities minimized.

These faults were first clearly pointed out by the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas and his followers during the 1920's and '30's. Boas' attack was on the so-called unilinear evolutionism and not on all concepts of evolution or on the philosophy of history as a whole. The burden of his advice was to be more cautious about theorizing and to accumulate a large number of verified particular facts on which future generalizations could be based. One should not, he said, assume in advance that art and culture evolve. The result was an era of extreme particularism in American anthropology, with the avoidance of almost all attempts at broadly integrating hypotheses. The movement as a whole has been called "the Boasian reaction." The concept of evolution was a special target of derision for it, as were the names of Spencer, Morgan, and Tylor. Most European anthropologists did not go to such extremes, although many agreed on the necessity for cautious pluralism. Subsequent research has corroborated Boas' criticism of unilinear evolutionism. Everyone today agrees that cultural history has been much more diversified than the nineteenth-century anthropologists realized.

However, there is now a new movement in anthropology, toward reviving theoretical studies. The concept of cultural evolution is again very much to the fore. Julian Steward has proposed a new kind of evolutionism called "multilinear."<sup>4</sup> David Bidney has published a critical survey of anthropological theory<sup>5</sup> which amply shows the need for more work along this line. It is frequently said that Franz Boas' own attacks on the nineteenth-century philosophies of history had considerable justification, but that some of his enthusiastic followers carried them to excess.

Only a few of the leading American anthropologists, notably the

<sup>4</sup> *Theory of Culture Change* (Urbana, 1955).

<sup>5</sup> *Theoretical Anthropology* (New York, 1953).

late Professor A. L. Kroeber, extended their studies of cultural history to the arts of civilized periods. Kroeber's recent small book, *Style and Civilizations* (Ithaca, 1957), is a pioneer study along that line. Apparently anthropology is backing away from the extreme Boasian reaction of the twenties and again looking favorably toward a theoretical approach to art history. Most anthropologists, however, lack enough knowledge of the history of civilized arts to undertake comprehensive studies along that line. Their interests are still usually limited to the prehistoric and primitive. Hence their writings do not fill the need for more theoretical studies in the arts of advanced civilizations.

Several different attacks on the philosophy of history have come from American historians and philosophers. Some of them are too weak to deserve much consideration. One still hears the argument that no historian today can know all branches of history, that a philosophy of art history is bound to be shallow. This has of course a kernel of truth; certainly no one can know everything about any subject, especially one so vast as the history of the arts. But that has never prevented philosophers from generalizing about the universe and man, sometimes with amazing insight in spite of limited knowledge of details. A genuinely philosophic mind can learn enough of the details to form reasonable hypotheses about the whole range of facts. He can, in other words, specialize on the general aspects of the universe, or of the arts.

Another charge against the philosophy of history is that it is necessarily *evaluative*, that it tries to tell us what is good and bad or right and wrong in past events; hence, that it can express only a personal or cultural set of standards, that it cannot be objective. Certainly, most philosophies of history have been evaluative. That of Condorcet emphasized progress or improvement. Spencer began by identifying progress with evolution, and only later separated the two concepts. Most other writers who have attempted a large-scale interpretation of history have included judgments as to whether things were moving from worse to better or in the opposite direction. This has been true in histories of art as well as elsewhere. The assumption that art is getting better on the whole is not limited to philosophies of history. It is implicit in most histories of art, even when they try to specialize on a narrow range of facts. It is impossible to avoid some evaluation. In any historical survey, the historian necessarily picks out events and trends which seem to him important for one reason or another. The art historian tends to give most space and illustrations to the styles and

artists he considers great. He speaks of the "advances" made in each period.

On the other hand, there has been a fuller realization in recent years that evaluation (either moral or aesthetic) presents distinctive and peculiar problems of its own. It is not something to be casually or dogmatically undertaken. The philosopher can, if he wishes, try to write a comparatively factual, objective account, describing and explaining the main trends, without venturing any judgment as to whether they are for better or worse. The evaluative element in the philosophy of history can thus be reduced to an unavoidable minimum.

On the other hand, there is nothing necessarily wrong or fallacious about trying to evaluate history on moral, aesthetic, or other grounds. Evaluation is a legitimate part of the philosopher's task, and may be enlightening if it is done wisely and explicitly, with due recognition of the theoretical difficulties involved. A naturalistic historian today will not claim to have any absolute, eternal basis for his judgments. He will recognize that he is expressing the standards of himself and his cultural environment. He will be more relativistic than most philosophers have been in the past. I see no reason why the historian should not try to answer the question of whether or not there has been progress or retrogression in art, and in what ways. He does not need to present these personal judgments as objective facts.

Many of the sweeping attacks on the philosophy of history have been made by supernaturalists of one sort or another—dualists or idealists—who object to the naturalistic tone of much nineteenth-century evolutionism, especially that of Spencer and Morgan. Not all supernaturalists object to philosophies of history; in fact, one of the greatest of them was made by Hegel, an idealist, who believed that the cosmic mind is in the process of developing toward increasing individuality and self-realization. Art history had a prominent place in his theory. On the other hand, some supernaturalists, especially of the dualistic persuasion, argue that the essentials of art are purely spiritual and hence outside the physical processes of life in human bodies on this earth. The essentials of art, they hold, come from divine inspiration and are not affected either by previous works of art or by social and technological factors in the environment. They take the mystical view that each work of art and each genius is completely unique and incomparable, a bolt from the blue, which owes nothing essential to any previous artist or to the social environment. Only the superficial externals of material and technique are parts of the evolutionary process,

according to this point of view. It has been well expressed by the novelist and mystic Aldous Huxley.

As a naturalist, I reject the view that there is any element whatever in art which is entirely detached from the natural processes of life on earth and from the evolution of physical bodies. It seems to me an obvious exaggeration to say that any artist or work of art is completely unique. No historical event is completely so. There are, of course, unique characteristics in every one of them, as there are in every leaf, cloud, and heap of dust. But there are other respects in which all phenomena resemble others of their kinds; hence generalizations can be made about them. All are integral parts of the flow of cultural history. As I look at the history of the arts, it seems to show constant influence from one generation of artists to the next, along with frequent breaks and changes of direction. Styles and types of art can be said to descend with adaptive modification, as in the descent of the classical tradition in sculpture and architecture.

Although my personal inclination is toward evolutionary naturalism, I welcome studies in the philosophy of art from any philosophical point of view. There is much to be gained from competition on the plane of ideas among the various approaches and hypotheses. Each one leads its followers to notice and emphasize different phenomena and different values, which may be neglected by the others. Each can usually learn something of value from his adversaries, even though they disagree on metaphysical fundamentals. I do regard the flexible, undogmatic naturalism of present American science as the most productive starting-point for aesthetic and historical theory. It is primarily a cautious empiricism which tries to avoid metaphysical commitments; but it is aware that these can never be entirely avoided without, at the same time, evading vital issues.

Another objection to the philosophy of history comes from writers who go to an extreme of nominalism. As against the Platonists, they rightly argue that there is no such thing as "humanity" in the abstract, apart from the individuals who make it up; also, that there is no such thing as a *Zeitgeist* or "spirit of the age" apart from the actions, thoughts, and feelings of human individuals. But, again, it is going too far to say that one must not write about human history because "humanity" in the abstract has no independent existence. These extremists would have us write only of particular groups and periods. Arguing along this line, one might go on to say that there can be no history of a group or period, but only of single individuals, or perhaps

of a single moment in the life of one of them. This is of course absurd. Humanity in the aggregate is as real as any individual, if we mean by it all the humans who have lived and will live, considered as to their generic and collective traits. Their total history as a genus is as real a set of phenomena as the history of any smaller group or individual. It can be described as to its main, common traits and sequences, without implying that all men are completely alike, or that some ghostly, independent *Zeitgeist* hovers mysteriously above them. Again, there is a moderate, reasonable position in such matters.

The final error to be noted is one which I have already touched upon. This is the mistaken charge that the philosophy of history is an attempt to prove the existence of absolute laws and regular patterns in human events. The philosophy of history does not need to start with any such preconceived assumption. It can and should be open-minded as to the existence of any unifying patterns or pervasive tendencies. Future investigation may or may not disclose more definite correlations and recurrences than we can see at present. But if we do not look for them, we are not likely to discover them. To do so requires more than a careful study of isolated events. It requires a systematic, large-scale comparison of groups and sequences of historical phenomena in different parts of the world at the same and different times, to see how much resemblance and how much diversity actually exist. No realm of historical research presents a wider range of concrete data for such study than the arts.

A fruitful line of investigation lies open to the aesthetician with an interest in history, and to the historian with an interest in aesthetics. There is need for cooperation between both fields of scholarship. Most of all, there is a present need for theoretical studies of moderate scope, which will point out hitherto unobserved connections between different fields. They need not call themselves "philosophies of art history," for that may seem to claim too much; but they can at least move in that direction. The philosophic quality in art history writing can be achieved on a smaller and more practical scale. In recent years we have had very little of it.

## George Herbert's Rhetorical World

"Rhetoric" is now one of the most used and abused words in the vocabulary of criticism. It can be taken to mean a commitment to persuasive intention in writing; it may refer to a specialized technique in writing; it may even (although this variant is quite antique) be used as a pejorative, implying woodenness and lack of conviction. In all three versions there lurks a suspicion that to be "rhetorical" is to be vaguely opposed to "creative," and that the writer who belongs in a tradition of rhetoric is academic, technique-ridden and unoriginal. The point of this essay is to argue that a commitment to rhetoric, instead of limiting a writer to a learned facility, actually involves him in a complex frame of reference; that rhetoric, properly defined, might better be called a *weltanschauung* than a *discipline*; and that to view rhetoric in this light is a considerable help in understanding and appreciating much of the poetry of George Herbert. The first emphasis in the essay will be generic and theoretical (necessarily), and then specific and analytic in its application to Herbert's poetry.

The first element in a genuinely rhetorical frame of reference is a belief in probability: a conviction that all non-factual apprehensions are not to be dismissed as merely opinionative or non-verifiable, but may occupy a sphere all their own. This sphere we call probability, and this acceptance of a middle ground between fact and opinion is the keystone of Aristotelian rhetoric (see *Rhetoric*, 1355<sup>a</sup>). The willingness to admit probability to a scientifically or syllogistically indemonstrable proposition is the major distinction between Aristotelian rhetoric and (a) a rhetoric which ignores the doctrine of probabilities and sees all statement as either fact or opinion, like the sophistic rhetoric of Gorgias; and (b) a rhetoric which blurs the distinction between fact and probability, and so eventually disposes of probability, such as the rhetoric of Agricola or Ramus. The Aristotelian-rhetorical frame of reference gives to abstractions, intuitions, and emotions the status of probable, even though they have no extension, no substance, no data to be empirically tested and passed as "fact."

\* R. E. Hughes, Chairman of the Department of English at Boston College, has published articles in such journals as *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, *Literature and Psychology*, and *Modern Language Notes* and is at present completing a monograph on Thomas Otway.

The second element in this frame of reference is the belief that isolated phenomena, experiences and perceptions find their real value when they can be absorbed into or subordinated to the abstract realm of probability. An atomistic approach to experience, the consideration of any one experience as having an essential value or meaning, is overborne by the greater value such an experience assumes when it is so abstracted and subordinated. Consequently, it is not the rhetor-poet's function to give a dramatic account of a single experience; rather, he must abstract from the experience and locate for his abstraction a place in the whole company of probabilities.

It is for the purpose of implementing this subordination, abstraction and location that the *trope* exists. The ordinary distinction is between *trope* as a logical figure involving a displacement or transfer of meaning (irony, metaphor, metalepsis) and *figure* as a decorative device involving word schemes (anaphora, brachylogia, polysyndeton). But trope is far more than an arbitrary choice of oratorical device; for it is through trope that any single experience or sensation is established in a field larger than itself. Consequently, we must distinguish between two kinds of trope: the paradoxical and the signal. Each may be used to subordinate a single idea to a large abstraction, even though each operates quite differently.

The paradoxical trope establishes a real equality between the *definiendum* and the *definiens*, between the experience to be defined and the defining comparison. Understood thus, in metaphor the literal and the applied meaning co-exist; in irony the combative points of view co-exist; in oxymoron the contraries co-exist. This admission of co-existent planes of meaning, which we term paradox, assumes at least a bi-dimensional view of reality; things exist, not on one level, but on several.

The signal trope, on the other hand, does not aim at establishing a real equality between *definiendum* and *definiens*: the defining term does not co-exist with the term to be defined, but simply points to it. The signal trope is an indicator, merely a participant in what is being defined.

There is far more than a verbal difference between these two kinds of trope. "She has a garden in her face" and "My Love is like a red, red rose" cannot be identified as paradoxical and signal trope, respectively, simply because Campion dispenses with the simile form of the copula. Each of these lines presents the *definiendum* (the mistress, the love) not as identical to the *definiens* (the garden, the rose) but as

being partially understandable in terms of the definer. The existence or non-existence of a *like* is no test of the difference between paradox and signal; the total world-view of a writer must be understood before we can determine which trope he is using—for the difference is not verbal but depends on whether he sees reality on several planes or on one plane. Both kinds of trope are most pertinent to the probability aspect of rhetoric, for the paradoxical shows individual experience to exist concurrently with abstraction or transcendence, while the signal subordinates individual experience to abstraction.

This is precisely the way in which Herbert's poetry is rhetorical. Rhetoric is not simply technique, not simply discipline, but is rather a way of looking at experience and ideas. A single probability dominates all, and the tropes of rhetoric, both paradoxical and signal, are used as demonstrators of that probability. The dominant mode of this demonstration is, for Herbert, allegory: for allegory subordinates the specious world of appearances to the real world of abstractions, while at the same time admitting single details which may assert their single, unabstracted identity. Allegory can be made to function as both paradox and as signal, and this George Herbert does.

The single probability at the heart of all Herbert's poetry is, of course, the communion between the human spirit and its creator. This intuition, so graphically presented in Izaak Walton's life of Herbert, came to be the focus of all the poetry (even as Herbert promised in his first poems, "My God, where is that ancient heat toward Thee" and "Sure, Lord, there is enough in Thee"). His conversion was not like Donne's or Newman's, rationally acquired; like Paul on the road to Damascus, Herbert was emotionally and instinctually converted. All the themes of Herbert's poetry (redemption, salvation, communion, conversion) are shoots from the main stem of this probability. The avowed intention of his poetry (as Walton quoted him) was to insist on this probability; and if he could not *prove* that probability, as a logician might, he could *demonstrate* it, as a rhetorician would: through trope, which presented both the attributes of and the uniqueness of God.

In those poems (and they make up, by far, the majority) in which Herbert demonstrates major attributes of God, the trope is signal. Not only is it *not* the experience of the speaker in the poetry which is important, but the historicity or the individuality of the event described is also unimportant. Human narrator and divine subject are both absorbed into an abstract framework, so that the material of the poem

becomes a signal trope, a pointer to a transcendent probability. Thus, we observe that a poem like "The Collar," for all of its discordant technique signifying the soul's painful rejection and re-discovery of God, is yet an imaginative re-occurrence, not an account of a present involvement in any torment. "The Quip," with its refrain of temptations met and overcome, likewise adopts a past, abstract and impersonal point of view. The meaning of such a point of view is that the experience which took place outside the limits of the poem has already been resolved, and has consequently been subordinated to the dominant probability. The use of a certain time scheme as a symbol of subordination is one indication of Herbert's use of signal: along with this we must class other examples of abstraction which negate unique details in favor of a transcendent idea—the allegorical *débat* (as in "Humilitie"), the allegorical inference ("Vertue," "Life"), and certainly one of the most notable examples of trope as signal, the poem "Prayer," in which nothing is predicated of the details, the absence of any copula effectively transforming each detail into a pointer:

Prayer, the Church's banquet, Angel's age,  
 God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
 The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
 The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;  
 Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's towre,  
 Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
 The six-daies-world transposing in an houre,  
 A kinde of tune which all things heare and fear;  
 Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and blisse,  
 Exalted manna, gladnesse of the best,  
 Heaven in ordinarie, man well drest,  
 The milkie way, the bird of Paradise,  
 Church-bels beyond the stars heard, the soul's bloud,  
 The land of spices, something understood.<sup>1</sup>

The predication is absent from the poem, as it is absent from the temporal world: predication, meaning, is supplied by reference outside the poem, outside the temporal. The matter of "Prayer" is incomplete; the entire poem is a signal trope, pointing beyond itself to the area of final predication.

The same effect of diverting attention away from the immediate

<sup>1</sup> *The Poems of George Herbert* (Oxford, 1955), p. 45. All references to Herbert's poetry are from this edition; further citations will be made in the text.

and the temporal to something transcendent and immutable is achieved still differently in a poem like "The Agonic." In these verses the physical agony of the crucifixion is not the focus of the poem. Instead, those details have their preface in a stanza which establishes an abstract problem:

Philosophers have measur'd mountains,  
Fathom'd the depths of seas, of states, and kings;  
Walk'd with a staffe to heav'n, and tracèd fountains;  
But there are two vast, spacious things,  
The which to measure it doth more behove:  
Yet few there are that sound them,—Sinne and Love. (p. 33)

This deduction, this inference, this abstraction, now is supplied with examples; so that the details which follow are made to be demonstrators of the inference rather than details *sui generis*. Furthermore, both subsequent stanzas conclude with an additional abstraction, so that all details are subordinated to a prior and a posterior abstract idea:

Who would know Sinne, let him repair  
Unto Mount Olivet; there shall he see  
A Man so wrung with pains, that all His hair,  
His skinne, His garments bloudie be.  
Sinne is that presse and vice, which forceth pain  
To hunt his cruell food through ev'ry vein.

Who knows not Love, let him assay  
And taste that juice which, on the crosse, a pike  
Did set abroach; then let him say  
If ever he did taste the like.  
Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,  
Which my God feels as bloud, but I as wine. (p. 33)

The transformation of the physical act of suffering, first to the general theme of Pain and Sin and then to the liturgical symbol of the sacramental wine, moves the historical and the unique event far into the background and emphasizes the one spiritual reality.

Thus far, we have seen examples only of the signal trope in Herbert's poetry, as embodiments of the concept of a single reality. There are several examples of Herbert's awareness of a dual reality, of the single, unique, historical co-existing with the abstract eternal—the unique not absorbed into or subordinated to the abstract, but existing along with it. The rhetorical instrument which conveys this concept is, of course, the paradoxical trope. Such a trope is evident in several poems whose

theme is the search of the soul for its God. In the process of the search, the point of view is abstractive and the tropes are signal; but at the conclusion of the search, the point of view is dual and the tropes are paradoxical. At the moment of discovery, the religious experience involves the double vision of two realities (one historical and unique, the other transcendental).

"Redemption" is perhaps the clearest instance of this ambivalence:

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,  
 Not thriving, I resolv'd to be bold,  
 And make a suit unto Him, to afford  
 A new small-rented lease, and cancell th' old.  
 In heaven at His manour I Him sought:  
 They told me there, that He was lately gone  
 About some land, which he had deerly bought  
 Long since on Earth, to take possession.  
 I straight return'd, and knowing His great birth,  
 Sought Him accordingly in great resorts—  
 In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts:  
 At length I heard a ragg'd noise and mirth  
 Of theeves and murderers; there I him espied,  
 Who straight, 'Your suit is granted,' said, and died. (p. 35)

The first quatrain of this sonnet is a variation on the theme of "The Collar": the chafing of the soul under the covenant with God. Herbert's use of antonomasia, the epithet of landlord to signify Christ, effectively directs our attention not to the historical figure but to one of his attributes. The second and third quatrains extend this abstraction into allegory, with its characteristic disregard of temporality and definite space, signifying the eternal and ubiquitous. But in the final line of the third quatrain and in the couplet, even while the antonomasia is lightly continued (the landlord's grant to the freeholder), the historic accidents of the crucifixion are asserted, even though they are not likely extensions of the landlord figure (the ragged noise, the position with the thieves, the death). The process of deducing meaning from the crucifixion which takes place in the greater part of the poem is replaced by an insistence on the single act itself. Individuation, which is the identifying mark of dual outlook, becomes a factor in the poem. The landlord figure is clearly a signal trope; but the details of the death scene operate in an entirely different sphere. They focus attention on themselves, insist on their identity, and introduce a second

reality: the physical reality of the crucifixion, which resists being submerged. To state it in previous terminology: the thing to be defined (Christ and the relationship between Christ and the human spirit) completely absorbs the definer *landlord*; whereas the details of the death do not function as definer only, but as a separate entity.

The poems "Christmas" and "Easter," which, considering their similar structure, ought to be compared, follow the same pattern of the search through allegory and abstraction for the single present act. Thus, in the sonnet-prologue of "Christmas," the Everyman-I rides through the allegorical no-where and no-time:

All after pleasures as I rid one day,  
My horse and I, both tir'd, bodie and minde,  
With full crie of affections, quite astray,  
I took up in the next inne I could finde.

The closing quatrains and the couplet perform a metalepsis, transferring the idea of the inn from the haven of the traveller to the inn at Bethlehem to the inn of the human soul which ought to receive Christ:

There when I came, whom found I but my deare,  
My dearest Lord, expecting till the grief  
Of pleasures brought me to Him, readie there  
To be all passengers' most sweet relief.  
O Thou, Whose glorious yet contracted light,  
Wrapt in Night's mantle, stole into a manger,  
Since my dark soul and brutish, is Thy right,  
To man, of all beasts, be not Thou a stranger:  
Furnish and deck my soul, that Thou mayst have  
A better lodging than a rack or grave. (p. 72)

All this is the characteristic abstracting process, wherein the detail is dominated by the idea which it partially defines; and the historical scene of the nativity is displaced by the inference to be made from that scene. However, the poem does not end here. The sonnet is prologue only, and the rest of the poem is a hymn to the infant, sung in companionship with the shepherds. The scene at Bethlehem, which the prologue had metamorphosed into a signal trope, is allowed to stand forth, not as sign at all, but an event as *réal* in its own terms as was the abstraction. "The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be": and even the time scheme has been altered, from past recollection to present

observation. What had been simply definer or pointer has now been allowed its literal significance.

"Easter" also involves an allegorical prologue to the historical resurrection; and, as in "Christmas," this prologue converts the event into a signal. The song which follows the sonnet, however, reconverts the day of resurrection back into its original self, the single day to be celebrated rather than the implications of the resurrection on that day.

As a final indication of Herbert's method of first relegating a specific and literal detail to a signal trope, and then reversing the process and allowing literal significance to overcome signal, we may notice "The Pilgrimage." Once again, the single transcendent reality is first presented, all temporalities having been interpreted as an indicator of that reality; but at the end the dual reality of both transcendent and literal are allowed to come through. The poem begins with the allegorical traveller, seeking his resting place. Past the "gloomy cave of Desperation," "the rock of Pride," "Phansie's meadow," "the wilde of Passion,"

At length I got unto the gladsome hill,  
   Where lay my hope,  
       Where lay my heart; and climbing still,  
       When I had gain'd the brow and top,  
 A lake of brackish waters on the ground  
   Was all I found.

This moment of the Dark Night of the Soul is momentary:

With that abash'd and struck with many a sting  
   Of swarming fears,  
       I fell and cry'd, 'Alas, my King,  
       Can both the way and end be tears?'  
 Yet taking heart I rose, and then perceiv'd  
   I was deceived,  
 My hill was further; so I flung away,  
   Yet heard a crie,  
       Just as I went, 'None goes that way  
       And lives.' 'If that be all,' said I,  
 'After so foul a journey death is fair,  
   And but a chair.' (p. 128)

Until the second voice is heard, the hill of Calvary is a trope, a sign of the abstract hill of completion and the end of the journey. But the *none* which is voiced involves both the literal Christ on the ascent to crucifixion *and* the journey of the soul to an acceptance of that

Death. The totality of *none* introduces the central paradox of the poem: Christ had to go that way to his death; through his death came redemption and life; the human spirit, if it goes the way of Christ, accepts death, which is Life. The sacrificial act was physical and real ("None goes that way and lives"), and at the same time metaphysical and abstract (the basic model for the text, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," John, xii. 24). The death was real, final and concrete, and simultaneously implicative, abstract and apocalyptic.

This rhetorical world-view of Herbert's, with its complete acceptance of the probability of an eternal truth, certainly does not produce a wooden or unoriginal art. The transformation of temporal events or details into signal tropes, the retransformation of those same events and details into paradox, the presentation of single and dual concepts of reality—this is a fullness achieved not in spite of but because of the poet's acceptance of rhetoric.

## *Dr. Leavis' Critical Apologia*

Dr. Leavis' defence of his critical position ("Criticism and Philosophy," *Scrutiny*, June 1937, republished in *The Common Pursuit*, 1952) is interesting both as a critical apologia of a major critic and as a clear statement of a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of criticism. I want to concern myself here with two basic assumptions expressed in the essay. These are: (1) that the processes of criticism and those of philosophy are opposed to each other; and (2) that criticism can "transmit" or "articulate" a sense of poetic value. The two assumptions are closely related, but the first is the main contention and subsumes the whole argument. They are, however, both dependent on a view of the critic as artist, as I shall hope to show, and it is to illustrate the fallacy of this view that my analysis of Dr. Leavis' essay is primarily aimed. Let me say at once that I am not again taking up Dr. Wellek's request for a more explicit statement of the results of the application of a critical method. Leavis is surely right in maintaining that criticism is best left in the terms which it finds relevant. Actually he spends only a little attention replying to this request and devotes himself chiefly to an account of what he understands of the process of criticism. It is this account of critical method I wish to consider.

Dr. Leavis' contention is that criticism is opposed to philosophy because philosophy is "abstract" and criticism deals with the "concrete": "Literary criticism and philosophy seem to me to be quite distinct and different kinds of discipline." Let me quote a relevant passage of his essay in full:

By the critic of poetry I understand the complete reader: the ideal critic is the ideal reader. The reading demanded by poetry is of a different kind from that demanded by philosophy. I should not find it easy to define the difference satisfactorily but Dr Wellek knows what it is and could give at least as good an account of it as I could. Philosophy, we say, is 'abstract' (thus Dr Wellek asks me to defend my position

---

\* D. L. Farley-Hills, Firth Scholar of the Queen's College, Oxford, is engaged at present in a study of poetic structure and its relation to meaning in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

more 'abstractly') and poetry 'concrete'. Words in poetry invite us, not to 'think about' but to 'feel into' or 'become'—to realize a complex experience that is given in the words. They demand, not merely a fuller-bodied response, but a completer responsiveness—a kind of responsiveness that is incompatible with the judicial, one-eye-on-the-standard approach suggested by Dr Wellek's phrase: 'your "norm" with which you measure every poet'. The critic—the reader of poetry is indeed concerned with evaluation, . . . . The critic's aim is first, to realise as sensitively and completely as possible this or that which claims his attention; and a certain valuing is implicit in the realising (*The Common Pursuit*, p. 212).

Put briefly the contention is that philosophy deals with concepts (and hence has a logical coherence) while literature and criticism deal with "experiences" or "values." It will be noticed at once that poetry itself and criticism are more or less equated throughout the passage—a statement is made about poetry and then assumed of criticism and *vice versa*. We pass almost imperceptibly from one to the other—"the ideal critic. . . . The reading demanded by poetry is of a different kind. . . . Philosophy . . . is abstract . . . and poetry concrete. . . . Words in poetry. . . . The critic—the reader of poetry is indeed concerned. . . ." Now really several different propositions are being made, some about poetry, some about reading poetry, and some about criticism. Let us try to sort them out. To start with, it is assumed that reading and criticism are the same thing; this is manifestly false. Of course a critic must read the poem he is criticising (just as a bacteriologist must look down a microscope in order to study bacteria); but this is an essential condition of his work not the essence of it. Dr. Leavis' account of what it is like to read a poem is quite a good description of a process with which most of us are familiar; but one can read in this way without being a critic. Criticism resides not in having the experience of reading poetry but in the statements we afterwards formulate in connection with the experience. Clearly it is only in these statements that criticism attains any reality at all, and then it becomes a matter of the order of words on the page; hence the idea of "feeling into" a poem is not an essential part of the critic's function but only an essential condition of his function—a vastly different matter. Then even if we grant that words in poetry demand a special form of appreciation (and this itself I believe to be only a rather dangerous half-truth), this does not tell us about the process of criticism. It may be true that poetry is more "concrete" than philosophy but this again

does not automatically apply to words in criticism; the processes of poetry and the processes of criticism are vastly different affairs. Then again when Leavis says that "the reading demanded by poetry is of a different kind from that demanded by philosophy" this is not the same as saying that the reading demanded by criticism is of a different kind from that of philosophy. Criticism is not "reading poetry" but what we think about reading poetry (or rather, a particular poem); hence criticism is to poetry as thought (philosophy) is to truth, and this again demonstrates that whereas poetry can be regarded as an "ultimate" value (like truth), philosophy and criticism are merely ways of indicating ultimate values. They are means not ends. Furthermore it is erroneous to suppose that because philosophy is "abstract" it does not make use of the "concrete." Philosophy, like criticism, uses intuitions of the concrete in order to induce concepts; hence, like criticism, it demands an initial process of "feeling into" or "intuitive understanding" (to use philosophical terminology) as a condition of its function.

There may be some valid sense in which poetry can be said to be "opposed" to philosophy, but as soon as we formulate the distinction, we see at once that far from criticism's being akin to poetry, it is much more closely allied to philosophy. Thus clearly poetry, unlike philosophy, can be said to have no particular aim: it does not aim to be "true," to correspond with verifiable facts; a poem cannot, as a proposition in philosophy can, be called true or false. The poetic process (in Coleridgean terminology) is a process of the imagination, not of conceptual thought. Put simply, one can say that poetry is an end in itself, philosophy a means to the end "truth" (or whatever). This at any rate is the view of poetry associated with the idea of "pure" poetry, and although I think it is erroneous it is at least historically respectable. Any other view of poetry would be bound to put Leavis' antithesis of poetry and philosophy in a worse light. But how can such a view be sustained of criticism? How can criticism in any sense be an end in itself? Clearly it is a means to the end of clarifying the particular work of art with which it deals. Now a means cannot be justified simply on the grounds that it produces a result (that is, Leavis cannot claim that his critical method does not need rational justification simply because he uses it and finds it useful). The only justification for a means is that it is efficient, that is, that it can be shown to produce the desired result. Criticism is thus like philosophy in being ultimately "accountable" in terms of the subject about which it makes statements.

Hence criticism must be conceptually (i.e. logically) coherent. In Leavis' terms: criticism can be seen to differ from poetry fundamentally because whereas poetry gives us "experience," criticism gives us thoughts about that experience.

If we turn to an analysis of Leavis' second assumption his position is seen to be even shakier, for he goes on to explain in detail what he conceives the function of criticism to be, namely the transmission of value. There is of course no reason why logical concepts should not transmit "experience" or "value" in the poetic sense (though theories of pure poetry usually find it difficult to accommodate the idea). After all, the second canto of the *Paradiso* is no less poetry for consisting largely of argument. But to state that critical concepts can transmit the value of some other thing (namely the "value" of the poetry it is criticising) is quite a different matter. Let us look at Leavis' own account of what the critic does: "His (the critic's) first concern is to enter into possession of the given poem (let us say) in its concrete fulness, and his constant concern is never to lose his completeness of possession, but rather to increase it. In making value-judgements (and judgements as to significance), implicitly or explicitly, he does so out of that completeness of possession and with that fulness of response . . . he aims to make fully conscious and articulate the immediate sense of value that 'places' the poem" (p. 213). The first part of the quotation really deals with the kind of reading we give a poem and I have already dealt with Leavis' conception of that. Here I am interested in his account of what happens in the second stage of the appreciation. The critic, according to Leavis, aims "to make fully conscious and articulate the immediate sense of value that 'places' the poem." Now I have already indicated that a poem can be said to differ from other forms of writing primarily in its power of articulating (transmitting) value. Moreover, value, unlike thought, cannot be transmitted in more than one form: if a poem is a good poem it is the perfect articulation of the value it is transmitting; hence the only way of representing its value would be to change its value (a nonsense). How then can you make a poem's value, (or the "sense of value" obtained from a poem which comes to the same thing,) more "fully conscious"? If it is not already "fully conscious" when we have read the poem (though of course most of us need more than one reading of a good poem before it "clicks"), there is either something wrong with the poem (that is, the value doesn't exist) or with the reader (he can't read properly). What is a poem if it is not an "articulation" of value?

And how can one make more conscious something that is designed as the only form capable of stimulating the consciousness in that particular way? In what way can the "value" of (shall we say) Blake's *Tyger* be articulated except in the form in which Blake did articulate it? Does Dr. Leavis really suggest that criticism should somehow re-write the poem? But then it would not be Blake's *Tyger*. And even if we regard the object of the evaluation of value (which, although a nonsense, is what is proposed) as to "place" the poem in relation to others, the articulation of the comparison (which is not the same as the articulation of the sense of value obtained from the poems) cannot be expressed in any other way than conceptually because comparison demands abstraction. The truth is that Dr. Leavis has fallen foul of his artistic view of criticism; he is using ideas which are at least arguably true when used of poetry but are nonsensical when used of criticism. His position in fact is seen to be very little different from Oscar Wilde's (or to be fairer "Gilbert's") lunatic view of criticism as the purest form of art.

Fortunately Dr. Leavis' practical criticism is not based on the principles he seems to think it is; indeed it is impossible that any criticism could be. But the very fact that he can so misunderstand the nature of what he practises is an indication of a serious critical weakness. For as we have seen, the processes of thinking about criticism are the processes of criticism itself. It is not legitimate for the critic to say, "My criticism is justified in its use," since criticism is dependent for its justification on something other than itself; and therefore its justification can only be determined in relation to the "object" (i. e. literature) which it gives information about. Its coherence, in other words, is a coherence of ideas in relation to perceived fact (the fact of literary experience). Hence ideas of criticism become of direct concern in criticism because the attitudes of mind demanded by both are the same.

Perhaps the view of criticism which seems to have been implied by these strictures is a somewhat negative one. If criticism cannot transmit value it would seem to consist either of a sort of literary propaganda, mere statements of "this is good, this bad" more or less subtly disguised (which tends to be Dr. Leavis' kind, though it must be admitted that he is usually right in the causes he chooses to espouse), or, alternatively, it will consist of talking about the propositions, etc. contained in literature (which Leavis accuses Wellek of doing). However I think this dilemma, though partly real, depends to some extent on the part we consider to be played by "thought" in literature

itself. This lies at the heart of all our present-day critical problems; but only when we consider thought quite inessential qua thought (as in pure theories) does the dilemma become really acute. Of course there is nothing wrong with the conception of criticism as propaganda (that is, as a means of "indicating" or "describing" poetic value in order to influence the reader's attitude towards it in some way), though whether this kind of criticism serves any useful purpose after a fairly elementary stage in the study of literature seems to me problematic. However, this is not the place to pursue these subjects further, for my object in this essay was simply to put in a word for clear thinking as a useful weapon in the critic's armoury. Might it not also be legitimate, though, to conclude from all this that the sooner English Literature takes over the responsibilities for the ideas it assumes, the less likely will it become for practitioners of criticism to make quite such naive assumptions as are so often made?

## *Picture and Gesture in the Yeatsian Aesthetic*

*I think the whole of our literature as well as our drama has grown effeminate through the overdevelopment of the picture-making faculty. The great thing in literature, above all in drama, is rhythm and movement. The picture belongs to another art—Letter to Frank Fay (1905)*

In his early years as a poet Yeats did not concern himself much with major aesthetic problems. Fired by the Irish renaissance and his own romantic imagination, he struggled initially to fasten onto some poetic subject that would satisfy both his artistic temper and his nationalist enthusiasm. Only after he had committed himself pretty firmly to Celtic mythology did the question of artistic method surface; and though this initiation into the technical mysteries of art stimulated him immensely, he found the large aesthetic questions more of an ordeal than he had anticipated. When he began to write for the stage in earnest just before the turn of the century, he saw at once that the rejection of realistic techniques, which had been easy for him as a lyric poet, was not simply transferable to his new role as a dramatist. In some way drama had achieved an alliance with realism that was difficult to break: mimesis was the oldest law of the theater. He knew, of course, that the great dramatists had always managed to transcend a mere imitation of reality without losing the familiarity with life that gave their art sweep and depth. But the Greeks and Shakespeare had written in special cultural climates, and Yeats had to find his own way of escape from the banalities of a servile realism. What served him best in the years with the Abbey was the strength and experience of the lyric poet that he brought to the stage. If he could unite his lyrical gift with the dramatic intensity that drama

\* Edward Engelberg, who has studied at Brooklyn College, the University of Oregon, and Cambridge University, has a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin and is now Assistant Professor of English at the University of Michigan. He has published in *Monatshefte* and *ELH*, and the present essay is part of a larger treatment of Yeats' aesthetic.

required, then he might achieve a union between "picture" and "gesture," between what he called in another context the "marmorean stillness" and the "turbulence of life."<sup>1</sup> Through such a fusion it would be possible to create a non-mimetic art that would not be shadowy but, on the contrary, sharp and focused: "Some of my friends . . . do not understand why I have not been content with lyric writing. But one can only do what one wants to do, and to me drama . . . has been the search for more of manful energy . . . for clean outline, instead of those outlines of lyric poetry that are blurred with desire and vague regret."<sup>2</sup>

Even before his experience with the theater Yeats had attempted to diminish the blurring effects of his style by writing long dramatic narratives in the well-established tradition of nineteenth-century poetry. The length of the poem, he thought, would increase his opportunities to introduce conflicting positions, or to work his tale toward some dramatic resolution. Even if conflict could not be sustained in a dramatic narrative, the longer poem would give him enough space to state opposing views symbolically or allegorically. To explicate *The Wanderings of Oisín* he wrote: "There are three incompatible things which man is always seeking—infinite feeling, infinite battle, infinite repose. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Each of the three islands in the poem was meant to symbolize one of the three incompatibles. But, as islands will, they stood in isolation; they were static. (Much later, in 1933, Yeats was more successful in giving his triad expression in his short poem "Three Things.") Yeats quotes Synge as proposing for his own dramatic ideal the confluence of three conflicting directions: "'There are three things any two of which have often come together but never all three; ecstasy, asceticism, austerity. I wish to bring all three together.'"<sup>4</sup> Asceticism and austerity are certainly close, and later Yeats

<sup>1</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Essays* (New York, 1924), p. 316.

<sup>2</sup> *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York, 1957), p. 849. All quotations from *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, Definitive Ed., © The Macmillan Company, 1956; *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*, © The Macmillan Company, 1953; and *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, © The Macmillan Company, 1957, are used by permission of the publisher.

<sup>3</sup> *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London, 1954), p. 111 (hereafter referred to as *Letters*). In "The Circus Animals' Desertion" the line reads: "Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose."

<sup>4</sup> *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York, 1953), p. 208 (hereafter referred to as *Autobiography*). On p. 310, in *The Death of Synge*, Yeats

changed "austerity" to "stoicism," a word clearly more suited to his own concept of drama as the "more . . . cheerful acceptance of whatever arises out of the logic of events. . . ." <sup>5</sup> More related to philosophy than to artistic means, "stoicism" also described more accurately the quality of contained passion rather than its absence, which "austerity" might suggest. Capable of embodying all three of these qualities, drama was obviously the most useful of genres for reconciling opposites or maintaining a tension among several forces that the dramatist could strategically place into the development of his action. Ultimately the "three things" represented such a configuration of tensions, and they resembled closely the "two ways" of art which Yeats had set forth in 1907, when he was already well under way as a dramatist. To choose between these two alternative directions was, in Yeats' own language, the "choice of choices":

There are two ways before literature—upward into ever-growing subtlety . . . or downward . . . until all is simplified and solidified again. That is the choice of choices—the way of the bird till common eyes have lost us, or to the market carts. . . . If the carts have hit our fancy we must have the soul tight within our bodies, for it has grown so fond of a beauty accumulated by subtle generations that it will . . . be impatient with our thirst for mere force . . . for the tumult of the Blood.<sup>6</sup>

In drama, up and down, the way of the bird and the market carts, might combine by bringing "the whole of life to drama, to crisis, [so] that we may live for contemplation, and yet keep our intensity."<sup>7</sup> While ecstasy would soar "upward," austerity and stoicism would check that flight, discipline the subtle tendency of the poet by directing him "downward" to the common realities of the market place. Through drama, then, Yeats hoped to find an equilibrium, a balance between the remoteness of a Shelley and the immediacy of a Villon. In search of precedent and tradition, he learned from an unusually comprehensive company: Shakespeare and Maeterlinck, the Greeks and Villiers de Lisle-Adam, Racine and Synge, and, eventually, the Japanese Noh dramatists.

It is no surprise that Yeats' early writings on the drama suffer from some confusion and a sense of uncertainty. While disliking realism, he could not sanction what often masqueraded as its antidote—a

changes the terms to read: "stoicism, asceticism and ecstasy." The same words are applied to Lionel Johnson in a lecture-essay of that name, *Collected Works* (Stratford-on-Avon, 1908), VIII, 186.

<sup>5</sup> *Variorum Edition*, p. 849. <sup>6</sup> *Essays*, pp. 330-331. <sup>7</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 186.

shadowy, insubstantial art. An admirer of the sparseness of Greek and, later, Japanese art, he could not disown the power of passion in Shakespeare; and although his attitude toward representational art was marked by suspicion, he conceded that Synge mastered the realistic form so that it became something higher than an "imitation of life." Also it became increasingly clear that the drama of kings and queens, of Celtic heroism, would be difficult to write in "common idiom." To gain a certain measure of poetic intensity he would need to sacrifice the language of the street; but in order to avoid the vaporous style that began to repel him even before he came to the theater, the lyric had always to be subdued, but not eliminated. The severe strain of checking his own impulses seriously undermined Yeats' confidence, and for a time he assumed a pose far more didactic and certain than he actually was. But all the struggle was worth escape from the "muddy torrent of shallow realism,"<sup>8</sup> a phrase he had already coined in 1889.

The primary objection to realism was levelled against its working premise: to create an illusion of reality. Like all romantics, Yeats was—at times almost snobbishly—derisive about the theater in the clap-net or "peep show" sense, in its sometimes absurd attempts to make an audience feel they are witness to a "real" experience. All such attempts to substitute the illusion for the reality were, Yeats felt, betrayals of art; if art had to apologize for its own existence it was not art at all. Goethe had taught him that "art is not nature because it is art"; Shakespeare has Touchstone tell Audrey in *As You Like It* that "the truest poetry is the most feigning." In the commercialism that so often accompanied realism Yeats recognized a deliberate effort to hide art with the spurious claim of presenting *une tranche de vie*, but the slice itself was a sign of a partial vision, a separation, a cutting away from some center. Symbols, though they were by definition abstractions themselves, would at least retain a fullness, a suggestiveness that might bring to the audience a richer and more ample image of life. However, even symbols were dangerous and could mislead the artist, from a false sense of spaciousness to a limitation as restrictive as that of realism. In introducing a book of drawings by W. T. Horton, in 1898, Yeats remarked that the symbolist, making his symbols only from the things he loves, is bound to fall into a "certain monotony"; there are Botticelli's and Rossetti's faces, and the well or the lighthouse in Maeterlinck's plays.<sup>9</sup> In a society where the audience would be

<sup>8</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Letters to the New Island*, ed. Horace Reynolds (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> W. T. Horton, *A Book of Images*, with an Introduction by W. B. Yeats

entirely familiar with recurrent symbols, the monotony of repetition would strengthen the dramatist's art rather than bore his public. But Yeats knew that those who would fill the seats of the Abbey would come with no such knowledge, no common sense of recognition to share with him. Yet symbolism remained a way to salvation. When, four years earlier, in 1894, he had written an enthusiastic account of his experience with *Axel* in Paris, he was understandably delighted with the Symbolist's victory over the "'photographing of life'"—he had found a play "in which all the characters are symbols, and all the events allegories. . . ." It was a false start. Twenty years later in a preface to a new translation of *Axel* he admits that his earlier "revivalist thoughts" leave him now "a little ashamed."<sup>10</sup> While *Axel* had avoided all the realistic fakery he hated it did not substitute all he loved—and needed—in art.

Nor was Maeterlinck's static drama a better example; it, too, was only half the unity he dreamed of realizing for himself. Maeterlinck's chief defect was in the unbroken silence that never moved. In all his plays Yeats noticed the conspicuous absence of that quality he admired most in Shakespeare, "that ceaseless reverie about life which we call wisdom." It is a reverie accented by some dramatic intrusion. "In all the old dramatists . . . one feels that they are all the time thinking wonderful and rather mournful things about their puppets, and . . . they utter their thoughts in a sudden line or embody them in some unforeseen action."<sup>11</sup> While "reverie" became a term filled with subtle meanings—Yeats used the word with remarkable insistence—in the present context he equates it with "wisdom," that sublimity and grandeur of archetypal thought which is the harvest of great minds. The phrase "mournful things" expresses more than the *dolorisme* of the 'nineties; Yeats always glimpses the eternally sad nature of all wisdom. Moreover, the word "puppet" refers not to Maeterlinck's puppets but to the objectified characters controlled by the "disinterested" dramatist. Motivated from within, not from without, these "puppets" live their own lives on the stage; they move with a freedom denied the characters in bondage to a dramatist who places more interest in effect than truth. Yeats once asked Verlaine whether

(London, 1898), p. 15. This introduction is in three parts; the first two only were later reprinted as "The Symbolism of Poetry."

<sup>10</sup> Jean Marie Matthias Philippe Auguste, Count Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Axel*, trans. H. P. R. Finberg, with a Preface by W. B. Yeats (London, 1924), p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Letters*, p. 255.

it was not true that Maeterlinck too often struck the nerves when he should have touched the heart; to which Verlaine answered, not without malice, that Maeterlinck was "'a little bit of a mountebank.'" <sup>12</sup> Yeats quite frankly admitted that he was attracted to the Belgian less by his plays than by his method. <sup>13</sup> As early as 1898 he had described the symbol-laden characters of the plays as "faint souls, naked and pathetic shadows already half-vapour and sighing to one another upon the border of the last abyss." <sup>14</sup> An overripeness had so softened Maeterlinck's plays that his art seemed drained of all vitality. Yet *Axel* and Maeterlinck attracted Yeats, and to fill their dreaminess with a startling reality still seemed a possible goal: "reverie" could be wedded to "passion."

The fundamental alternatives were simple enough: a drama of character and action (plot); Shakespeare's infinite variety and passion; the stark, statuesque qualities of Greek art; the symbolic allegorical drama of the symbolists. If no clear choice was possible, or even desirable, the problem was how to avoid combinations of methods that would thin out and weaken their special qualities. One had first to neutralize the extreme effect of a dramatic method—and so change it entirely in the process—before joining it with another. So Synge, for example, had not entirely rejected realism, but in appropriating some image of reality had rounded the edges of that reality with a poetic rhythm that was almost contrapuntal to the mimetic aspects of plot and character. Whatever the gamble, Yeats' hope was to produce something altogether new from the roots of the old. *The Shadowy Waters*, from its beginnings in 1894 (the year of *Axel*), when Yeats still persists in calling it a "poem," to its final acting version at the Abbey in 1906, tells a history not only of a play but of the lyric poet's successive struggles with dramatic theory. Beginning with a half-symbolic, half-allegorical intention and an insistence on the ceremony of the "chanted word," Yeats ends by sacrificing nearly all in the earlier versions for "homely phrases" and the "idiom of daily speech." Altering the very "temper" of the play, he yet maintained that he had not abandoned poetry: "I have made the sailors rough . . . characterized all the people more or less, and yet not lost any of my lyrical moments. It has become a simple passionate play. . . ." In the process he discovered that poetic language is strengthened by "common idiom," just as construction is solidified by "common passion." <sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>14</sup> *Essays*, p. 233.

<sup>15</sup> *Letters*, p. 462. See the excellent article by Thomas Parkinson, "W. B. Yeats: A Poet's Stagecraft, 1899-1911," *ELH*, XVII (1950), 136-160.

This general change in tone and temper, the tightening of verse, was accompanied by a new sense for clash and conflict and a climactic ending, concessions to that aspect of "theater" which seemed at first so distasteful to Yeats. Most important he was sufficiently perceptive to have noticed the veritable jungle of symbols that impeded a reader, let alone an audience, of the earlier versions. Now he has put the play into motion, "getting rid of needless symbols, making the people answer each other, making the groundwork simple and intelligible."<sup>16</sup> At the time that *The Shadowy Waters* was being subjected to final revisions in 1906, Yeats read, and was obviously impressed with, Arthur Symons' essay "The Ideas of Richard Wagner." Actually the essay is all Wagner: a paraphrasing, and more often the actual quotations, of Wagner's salient principles of aesthetics. "The Wagnerian essay," Yeats wrote Symons, "touches my own theories at several points, and enlarges them at one or two. . . ." A certain passage in *The Shadowy Waters* had given him considerable difficulty; it had struck a wrong note. From Symons' essay he singled out Wagner's insistence that "a play must not appeal to the intelligence, but by being . . . a piece of self consistent life directly to the emotions."<sup>17</sup> Although the points where the Wagnerian aesthetic touched on Yeats' own were numerous, the largest single area of agreement was this distinction between the emotional and rational appeal of art. The "masculine" artist, said Wagner, must be immersed in life, and "from life [he] derives the . . . material which he will turn into a new and living art."<sup>18</sup> A "living art" had the vitality of "bodily motion" and "rhythm"; all the arts, Wagner argued, had a common impulse, "lyric drama." Once poetry was "spoken and sung" and was born anew always from "the midst of the people"; now the "art poets" have ruined the marriage with deliberate divorce. Even the problem of stasis and flux Wagner had considered in terms that closely resembled Yeats': "Christian legend can only present pictures, or, transfigured by music, render moments of ecstasy. . . . The essence of drama is living action. . . ." To Wagner drama is "the emotionalising of the intellect," the point to which Yeats acknowledged his special debt; the dramatist, said Wagner, must find his action in "a new creation of myth, and this myth must arise from a condensation into one image of all man's energy

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 459-460.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Symons, "The Ideas of Richard Wagner," *Studies in Seven Arts* (New York, 1925), p. 146.

... nature apprehended, not in parts by the understanding, but as a whole by the feeling . . . [a] strengthening of a moment of action. . . ." <sup>19</sup> In the same year, 1906, Yeats prefaced his *Poems 1899-1905* with the remark that "All art is . . . an endeavor to condense as out of the flying vapour of the world an image of human perfection. . . ." <sup>20</sup> And in a letter a year earlier he concluded that "all the finest poetry comes logically out of the fundamental action" <sup>21</sup>—that poetry and action cross-fertilize each other, for poetry without action would lead to the complete paralysis of movement, while action without poetry would cause movement alone to dominate. Neither result was desirable.

It was a mistake, then, to envision the lyric impulse as self-sufficient and unattached to the gesture of action, just as Wagner had argued it was inconceivable to think of music without poetry. The 'nineties had clung too tenaciously to the theory that "some things are inherently poetical" and might be packed into "the scene at every moment." Such poetical things "wear out"; "My *Shadowy Waters*," Yeats confessed, "was full of them . . . and that gave the whole poem an impression of weakness." <sup>22</sup> Diana Vernon, his mistress and oracle, had told him what he already knew: stay away from artifice and live close to the "simple, popular, traditional, emotional." <sup>23</sup> By sheer coincidence this oracular advice just preceded his departure for Ireland on the journey that was to lead him to Lady Gregory and, eventually, to Coole, where in microcosm he found the society from which simple, popular, traditional, emotional had once been able to evolve and take shape. Certainly no realistic problem literature, like Ibsen's or Shaw's, would suit such ideals.

Throughout his early struggles as a dramatist, Yeats was a fairly isolated figure, intent on overcoming all the inherited obstacles that stood in his way: he would have a drama neither wholly symbolic nor wholly realistic, not "popular" in the middle class sense but representative of folk and mythic traditions. Its rhythms were to be sufficiently expansive to allow for passion and yet simple; its language full of style but not artificial; its emotions grand but not abstract. By 1897 he had already formulated something approaching a theory, though essentially it took account only of peripheral effects. Scenery must be symbolic, not realistic; and "the acting should have an equiva-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153, 165, 167-168.

<sup>20</sup> *Variorum Edition*, p. 849.

<sup>21</sup> *Letters*, p. 460.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 223.

lent distance to that of the play from common realities."<sup>24</sup> Several days after the founding of the Irish National Literary Theatre two years later, Yeats wrote a long letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, in which he elaborated his earlier suggestions. Foremost is his resistance to anything that might aid illusion or delusion; both are rejected: the first by implication, the second on principle. For Dr. Johnson's assertion that we always know we are in the theater as well as Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" are indirectly encumbrances on pure imaginative indulgence. Although the sentiment, "I want to be able to forget everything in the real world" is slightly Pateresque, the "real world" must not be confused with reality. Every attempt, through representational props, to remind us of the "real world" destroys, in Yeats' language, the moment of "imaginative glory," the instant at which art announces its selfhood. Already he is thinking of scenery with a "severe beauty, such as one finds in Egyptian wall paintings"; the symbolic backdrop is not to be shadowy and remote but distinct and austere. Modern theater has not failed because imagination and intellect have disappeared, but because the spoken word has lost all prestige, theater has been created all for the eye rather than the ear, and commercialism must attract, or divert, its audience with finery and glitter.<sup>25</sup>

Yeats was aware that his audience would come neither from the peasant cottages nor the streets of Dublin, and still less from the aristocratic houses already in steady decline. In a long essay in 1899, "The Theatre," he clearly indicated that he sought an elite audience, though through bitter experience some seven years later he was to discover that some of the "simple people" he wished for became the most effective rioters against the *Playboy*. With the exception of his own plays, his prophecy of the kind of drama which the "movement" would foster was equally off the mark: "our plays will be . . . remote, spiritual and ideal." In his assertion that the aim of all culture is "to bring again the simplicity of the first ages, with knowledge of good and evil added to it," he echoes Herder and Rousseau, though the good and evil comes from the *Zeitgeist* of Baudelaire and Nietzsche. Drawing both upon the romantics and Pre-Raphaelites, he proclaims an identity of art and religion; the drama must be given back to the "artist-priests" and they will once more make "their Art the Art of the people."<sup>26</sup> Having originated in ritual, to it alone the theater must return.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters*, p. 280.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 308-311.

<sup>26</sup> *Essays*, p. 207.

But who gave any serious thought to ritual? "How," Yeats asked in 1907, after much disillusion, "can I make my work mean something to . . . simple men . . . not given to art but to a shop . . . ?" Little more than six years had convinced him that despite his awareness of reality he had somehow lost touch with those elements of the populace that he had most favored as sustaining art—his art had perhaps become so anonymous it was entirely private. It is, after all, he now admitted, the "intensity of personal life" which moves men, but this "personal energy . . . must seem to come out of the body as out of the mind." It was all too possible for the dramatist to threaten his characters by placing them in a world they could never survive. He must always ask himself, "Have I given [my characters] . . . the roots . . . of all faculties necessary for life?" It was his initial commitment to an art of "personality"; he was discovering the "dissociation" which so persistently was to impress itself on the modern imagination. While language was losing prestige, there was an equal loss of personality—"blood, imagination, intellect, running together—but we have found a new delight, in essences, in states of mind, in pure imagination. . . ." <sup>27</sup> Essences without bodily energy: it was the weakness of Maeterlinck, a tendency of the subtle path that needed to be checked before it removed art from its source beyond reach and reconciliation. Drama had been intended as the exuberant vision of a multiple fulfillment. As he had prophesied in "The Autumn of the Body," it was to be the promised regeneration, the awakening from the weariness that had put art to sleep. Synge must have been in his mind when he described the ideal conception of the future art as: "joyful, fantastic, extravagant, whimsical, beautiful, resonant, and altogether reckless." <sup>28</sup>

By 1905 Yeats' interest in heroic legend had decisively supplanted his earlier enthusiasm for the folk. The excitement of decision and a measure of certainty produced a flurry of dogmatic assertions, not altogether lacking in charm: "All good art is extravagant, vehement, impetuous . . . beating against the walls of the world"; "All art is founded upon personal vision; . . . all bad art is founded upon impersonal types . . . accepted by average men . . . out of imaginative poverty and timidity . . ."; <sup>29</sup> "The greatest art symbolises not those things . . . we have observed . . . [but] those . . . we have experienced"; "All fine literature is the disinterested contemplation or expression of life" <sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 328-330.

<sup>28</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Plays and Controversies* (London, 1923), p. 123.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-159.

—the prose, like the pronouncements, has the energy that was to rescue the drama from the threat of pictorial stasis. He had already foreseen the issue in 1904:

There are two kinds of poetry, and they are commingled in all the greatest works. When the tide of life sinks low there are pictures, as in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. . . . The pictures make us sorrowful. We share the poet's separation from what he describes. It is life in the mirror . . . but when Lucifer stands among his friends, when Villon sings . . . when Timon makes his epitaph, we feel no sorrow, for life herself has made one of her eternal gestures, has called up into our hearts her energy . . . . the imagination of personality . . . drama, gesture.<sup>31</sup>

In the extravagance of art, in its recklessness—its “gesture”—the artist could regain his foothold on life without insisting on a photographic imitation. Style, in its broadest sense, would transcend language and give to the whole dramatic configuration a force and *liveliness* of a higher order than the merely *lifelike*. In 1914, in a letter to his father, Yeats conceived of style as embodying the “two elements” of picture and gesture or, as he put it, the “impersonal and generally in great poetry sorrowful, and the other personal and pleasurable.” Both exist side by side in the best poetry.<sup>32</sup> With ease the dramatic aesthetic proliferated, and by the end of the first decade of the Abbey experience, in 1910, dramatic theory had become a way—and a new way—of looking at all art. The Abbey provided Yeats with a testing ground, a place where he could maneuver his discoveries, test his theories, modify weaknesses, and consolidate strengths.

Among Yeats' several self-professed failings, the tendency to beautify seems to be most outstanding, even before the theater experience. It was a natural fault inherited from the 'nineties. Early he became convinced that “We should write out our own thoughts in as nearly as possible the language we thought them in, as though in a letter to an intimate friend.”<sup>33</sup> Such was the intimacy John Butler Yeats had in mind in a letter to his son in 1909, to which Yeats answered with approval. The opposite of intimacy was “generalisation,” for intimacy was “experience” and “life” itself; the non-intimate becomes the rhetoric of Kipling's poetry or the essays of Macaulay.<sup>34</sup> Great art is

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>32</sup> *Letters*, pp. 586-587.

<sup>33</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> *Letters*, p. 534.

miraculous because it is only *half*-anonymous, intensely personal and intimate, and yet rooted in tradition and evocative of the profoundest common passions. Only a sense of "personality" could achieve the personal universal, the lyric poet's epic and dramatic resonance. In 1910 Yeats prepared three lectures, each of which, he wrote his father, constituted a "plea for uniting literature once more to personality, the personality of the writer in lyric poetry or with imaginative personalities in drama."<sup>85</sup> Such an ideal would take issue with the "philosophical propaganda"—abstraction—of AE, which obliterated not only intimacy but reality as well. In one of his lectures Yeats divided literature into two camps: the "old writers," who were preoccupied with their own sins, and the "new writers," who were busy with the sins of the world. Among the old he placed Shakespeare, among the new Milton.<sup>86</sup>

The point was that Shakespeare, out of his own *Vision of Evil*, could seize and then objectify sin in some of his great dramatic personages—Timon and Macbeth, Claudius and Iago. Milton, however, proceeded from a traditional *Vision of Evil*, imposed, as it were, by divine order; the sins of the world became necessarily abstract. Seen in the context of the greatest writers, this dichotomy works clearly enough. Paradoxically, the Reformation individualized sinning but abstracted the sin. Though Yeats did not elaborate, this literary dualism explains Yeats' reluctance to accept the particular visions of such poets as Baudelaire and Wilde. For Baudelaire and Wilde, too, had their eyes on the sins of the world; and their method of coping with them ultimately deprived each, as much as it had Milton, of personal and intimate drama. Baudelaire's disgust and Wilde's irony were, in the end, superimposed moralities; what was personal in their poetry was only the remains of a conflict, the ashes of the warfare between personality and the hostile world which consumed it. The new writers were chiefly moral, as distinct from ethical; whether in support of traditional moralities, like Milton, or against them, like Baudelaire or Wilde, the motivating force of their art depended largely on a *Vision of Evil* extended from the single individual to society. No less concerned with order and an aggregate moral framework, the old writers nevertheless were more confident in choosing the individual as sole possessor, executor, and actor of his *Vision of Evil*, facing this *Vision* in the isolation that made him a tragic hero. In a different context dealing with the same subject, Yeats was obviously thinking

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555.

of the Protestant Ethic which, having shifted the focus from Hell to Earth, found itself faced with Evil that no individual could any longer bear himself once he stood outside the framework of rewards and punishments in the Dantesque universe. Like Shelley (whom Yeats accused of having no real Vision of Evil), many post-Renaissance poets were forced to abandon the final agonies of a Faustus—man pulled by opposing forces, neither of which was in *this* world. They socialized evil, diminished the hero's share in it, and by spreading Evil over a collective society lost both the horror and the passionate glory that had made the older art so intense. "A soul shaken by the spectacle of its sins or . . . in tragic delight, must offer to the love that cannot love but to infinity a goal . . . while a soul busied with others' sins is soon melted to some shape of vulgar pride." These, it seems, were at least the possibilities of Yeats' distinction which, though he did not himself draw them out, are certainly suggested in his hesitant and vacillating treatment of Wilde. For Yeats, Wilde always fell short of the tragic dimension because the personal passion was too much distilled, the irony too dominant, the comedy too obviously a grotesque distortion of the underlying tragedy.

An art troubled by the intensity of a genuine Vision of Evil would arouse a higher order of passion than an art disturbed by "the trembling of the veil"—Mallarmé's phrase, which Yeats took over for a section of his *Autobiography*. Although "no man believes willingly in evil or in suffering," the "strength and weight of Dante and Balzac comes from [such] unwilling belief. . . ." <sup>37</sup> Yeats might well have been thinking of *Inferno*, II, at the beginning of which Dante girds himself for the war "both of the journey and of the pity." For the strength of the *Divine Comedy*—its passion—owes much to the inexorable journey, descent or ascent, against the overwhelming Vision of Evil which, with its human suffering, repeatedly arouses Dante's pity while, at the same time, it drives him deeper to the final vision. When he compared modern writers—Balzac excepted—to Dante, Villon, Shakespeare, and Cervantes Yeats found, instead of "strength and weight," something "slight and shadowy." The great poet draws his sustenance from his "preoccupation with evil": <sup>38</sup> after the great descent comes the great ascent; out of negation grows affirmation.

"The trouble with all . . . modern poets and painters," wrote John Butler in a letter replete with capitals and italics, "is that they are

<sup>37</sup> W. B. Yeats, *If I Were Four-and-Twenty* (Dublin, 1940), p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

TRIFLERS. *They have never been forced into a close relationship with life. . . . Fancy Sargent forced into a close relationship with life like Miller, like Michael Angelo. . . .*<sup>39</sup> When, in the *Autobiography*, Yeats stops an account of the history of Art to focus on a comparison of a Sargent painting with a Strozzi portrait, he unmistakably allies himself to his father. Sargent's President Wilson and Strozzi's painting of a Venetian gentleman hung, for some reason, on the same wall in the Dublin National Gallery. Yeats observed the two paintings and from them intuited a complete aesthetic cleavage in principles that separated the two periods of history:

Whatever thought broods in the dark eyes of that Venetian gentleman, has drawn its life from his whole body; it feeds upon it as the flame feeds upon the candle . . . his whole body thinks. President Wilson lives only in the eyes, which are steady and intent; the flesh about the mouth is dead, and the hands are dead, and the clothes suggest no movement of his body . . . but that of the valet, who has brushed and folded in mechanical routine. There [in the Strozzi portrait] all was an energy flowing outward from the nature itself; here [in the Sargent portrait] all is the anxious study and slight deflection of external force; there mind and body are predominantly subjective; here all is objective, using those words not as philosophy uses them, but as we use them in conversation.<sup>40</sup>

This confirmed the way of the old masters who, working outward from their own nature, their own sin, were the more completely subjective artists; modern art served morality and was divorced from life. Yet such conclusions were vastly oversimplified; Yeats was suggesting far deeper, far subtler differences.

Energy and the "thinking body" are not new: he had insisted on them for years; but the metaphor of the flame feeding upon the candle is more precise than any he had used before. If the thought feeds upon the body as the flame upon the candle, then thought has intensity and heat: it is not mere intellect. Also the thought in the Strozzi portrait is not self-consuming but consumed with that which it was nourished by, exactly as Shakespeare suggests in his sonnet, youth is consumed by the body. In the Sargent portrait, President Wilson, who

<sup>39</sup> John Butler Yeats, *Letters to his Son W. B. Yeats and Others 1869-1922* (London, 1944), p. 139 (hereafter referred to as *J. B. Yeats: Letters*).

<sup>40</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 175. Strozzi was born in 1581 in Genoa, died in 1644 in Venice.

nskip  
n life  
phy,  
rison  
allies  
nting  
all in  
and  
that

ward  
sub-  
life.  
sting

d on  
ndle  
feeds  
nsity  
rozzi  
was  
th is  
who

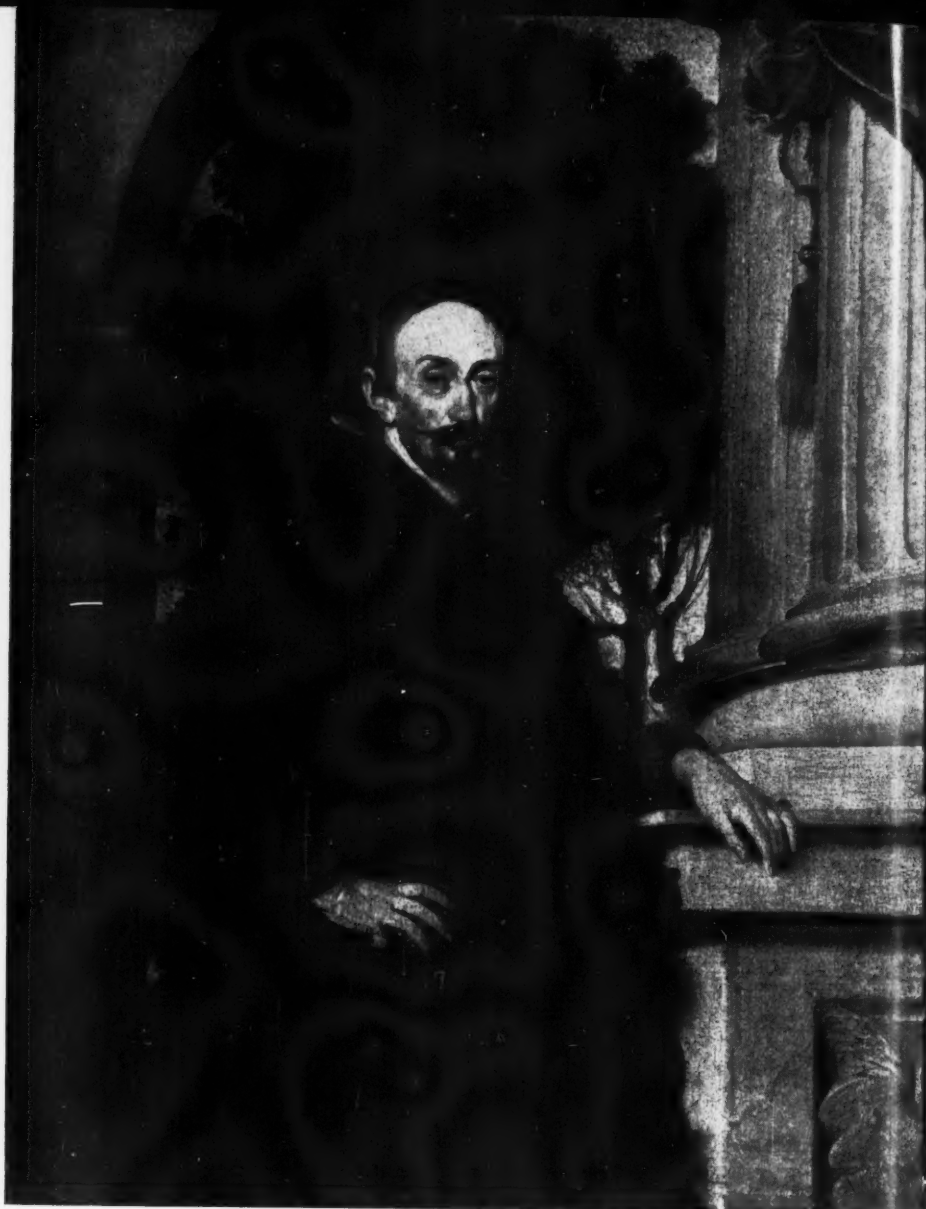
-1922

44 in



*Courtesy of National Gallery of Ireland*

*John Sargent, Portrait of President Wilson.*



Courtesy of National Gallery of Ireland

*Bernard Strozzi, Portrait of a Gentleman.*

is animated only by the fixity of his eyes, has no longer a body that can feed or be fed: he has frozen into a picture safe for the eyes which, instead of expressing some inner vision, seem only to stare upon an outer. The two paintings clarify the difference between the energy of an inner dramatic projection and the passivity of response, the articulate and the vague "vision." "You, long ago, said Poetry is creation," writes John Butler, "... that it has its source in vision and in vision only."<sup>41</sup> "I think with you," wrote Yeats, "that the poet seeks truth, not abstract truth, but a kind of vision of reality which satisfies the whole being." Of course, abstractions could not be entirely eliminated; art was itself abstract. Though he cursed them Yeats admitted that in some dialectical fashion abstractions were part of art, of passion with its indefinite resonance, "one half its life and yet its enemy."<sup>42</sup> It was inevitable that the correspondence should eventually turn to the most fundamental question: what *is* art?

Thinking like a portrait painter, John Butler suggested that, within the framework of definitions hitherto agreed to, all art was "imitation." Yeats did not so much refute as enlarge. Art, he felt, "uses the outer world as a symbolism to express subjective moods." In its way, it is an ingenious compromise between romantic and classic. By and large the romantic cherishes subjective mood; but his mood ranks highest, so that ultimately its self-expression is shaped not as a correspondence to the outer world but as a self-sufficing emotion. The mood is its own symbol. For Yeats the outer world always remains rather majestically essential: it is from it that symbols are drawn and find affinity with inner revelations. Yeats' hawks and herons are not one with Coleridge's albatross. The symbol chosen from the outer world—for its outer worldliness—rings the work of art, unites the artist with his world, the subjective with the objective. Imitation is proportionally governed by the degree of subjectivity: "The greater the subjectivity, the less the imitation." But the subjectivity itself is sometimes inherent in the object of nature. "You [John Butler] say that music suggests now the roar of the sea, now the song of the bird, and yet . . . the song of the bird itself is perhaps subjective, an expression of feeling alone." Object and subject are not simply separable as the dead reality which the imagination appropriates and then makes live. Essentially it is, of course, in execution that art separates itself from the imitative process: "The element of pattern in every art is . . . not imitative, for . . . there will always be somewhere an intensity of pattern . . . never seen with our eyes. In fact, imitation seems to me to create a language in which we say

<sup>41</sup> J. B. Yeats: *Letters*, p. 178.

<sup>42</sup> *Letters*, p. 588.

things which are not imitation."<sup>43</sup> Believing that nature provides her own patterns, the realist, at his simplest, would indicate mere imitation; but abstraction of nature's patterns always creates anew patterns of art itself. By the time imitation is expressed, pattern has so altered the original that, in the final product, it is difficult to speak of imitation at all. Though subtly evasive and circular, this separation of the object from the process that creates it was fully consistent with Yeats' conception of art as vision, while the artist was not a visionary but a maker.

But John Butler was not entirely satisfied; theoretical prevarication irked his common sense. He wrote back and asked for examples of the imitation-theory Yeats had proposed. In his answer Yeats returned to his "picture"—"gesture" dualism of twelve years earlier, though the perspective this time was different:

You ask for examples of "imitation" in poetry. I suggest that the corresponding things are drama and the pictorial element and that . . . those who lack these are rhetoricians. I feel in Wyndham Lewis's Cubist pictures an element corresponding to rhetoric arising from his confusion of the abstract with the rhythmical. Rhythm implies a living body . . . while the abstract is incompatible with life. The Cubist is abstract. At the same time you must not leave out rhythm and this rhythm is not imitation. Impressionism by leaving it out brought all this rhetoric of the abstract upon us.<sup>44</sup>

Pattern itself, then, here called "rhythm," is the life-giving element of art, though non-imitative. Yeats finds precedent in a book of Japanese paintings, where he saw everywhere a "delight in form, repeated yet varied, in curious patterns of lines, but these lines are all a curious ordering of natural objects though they are certainly not imitation." What impressed him most was the sense of conscious arrangement, a deliberate attempt to pattern the outer world, to suit it to some inner mood perhaps. In the Impressionists' philosophy such arrangement was considered to be "unconscious and instinctive," and it is to this that he credits the vigorous reaction of Cubism. By striving to regain consciousness of arrangement, the Cubists have taken the right direction; their weakness, their error, has been to replace "conscious feeling" with "abstract scientific thought": it is this which encourages the confusion of rhythm with the abstract. Abandoning the outer world, Cubism has done away with more than art could afford to give

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 607.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 608-609.

up, for rhythm is perfectly compatible, though not identical, with nature: "If I delight in rhythm I love nature though she is not rhythmical. The more I express [rhythm] the less can I forget [nature]."

Because he makes pictures one cannot forget and sees them "as full of rhythm as a Chinese painting," Keats is a greater artist than Shelley, certainly greater than Swinburne, whom Yeats again found hopelessly abstract. Carlyle has only "ideas—never things . . . worn out images"; they have cast him into oblivion. Flooded with moral zeal and abstractions—"God, Eternity, Work,"—he could be neither dramatic nor pictorial. "I separate," Yeats concludes, "the rhythmical and the abstract"; though "they are brothers . . . [rhythm] is Abel and [the abstract] is Cain."<sup>45</sup> The analogy was meant to be appalling; life and art both are slaughtered by the abstractions without which neither could be complete. It was the artist's responsibility to prevent, if he could, the fratricide that would cancel his art altogether; though he must acknowledge the kinship of Cain, he must banish him ultimately from domination of his work. For to Yeats it was after all Abstraction that had criminally assaulted, and subdued, Victorian poetry.

However right Yeats may have been in his periodic outbursts against the dangers of abstraction, his judgment that Cubism had no rhythm, or confused rhythm with abstraction, seems odd, especially in view of his own training as an artist. One explanation is that, for him at least, Cubism was *too* abstract. Bound always to a sense of reality, he depended on signs from the objective world which he must have missed in the more mathematical proportions of the Cubist's canvas. Allusion and suggestion were sufficiently distanced from the real world; but to abandon that world altogether for "technique" was, in painting and in poetry (one recalls the criticism of Pound as a pure technician), to lose sight of the essentially human transcendence of significant form. Also it is likely that, at least in Wyndham Lewis, Yeats saw an arrested rhythm, the rather violent brushwork that always stops short of completion and appears to fall into accidental patterns, like the sudden turn of a kaleidoscope. Later in life he was to see more clearly the tension that such partial pattern induces, but he could never reconcile himself to it, never embrace it as a way to unity. Beyond the pattern and the rhythm there had to be form, of course, but not the form of abstractions which threatened to be no form at all. "Measurement began our might": the classical proportions, with their inherent sense of movement (first recognized by Winkelmann in his famous phrases, "noble grandeur and still magnificence"), were closer to what he asked

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

of art. Such statues, as he said in his poem on them, "moved or seemed to move. . . ." <sup>46</sup> Less than five years before his death he prophesied, hopefully: "Perhaps now that the abstract intellect has split the mind into categories, the body into cubes, we may be about to turn back towards the unconscious, the whole, the miraculous. . . ." <sup>47</sup>

Picture and gesture: Yeats continued to describe art in these terms throughout his life. What he once called "still intensity" would always be animated by the "emotion of multitude"—the poetic focus would be rescued from paralysis by the poetic echo. Like the image-begetting sea in "Byzantium," the abundance of "life . . . trembling into stillness and silence" <sup>48</sup> was to be aesthetically set in motion by the very "ecstasy" of the epiphany, which was like "some fulfilment of the soul in itself, some slow or sudden expansion of it like an overflowing well," <sup>49</sup> the principle that shaped the Japanese Noh drama (which Yeats discovered through Pound): "A swift or a slow movement and a long or a short stillness, and then another movement." <sup>50</sup> Unlike the aesthetic that Stephen Dedalus offers in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Yeats' conception of art did not stop with the "arrest" of emotion. Dedalus' (or Joyce's) insistence that art is never kinetic but induces "the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure," is precisely what Yeats struggled to escape from when he turned to drama. Joyce seems to have had an almost pathological fear of violent passion which biographers have explained as consequences both of his uncertain eyesight and his early religious experiences. Whatever the cause, Joyce's notion of the aesthetic epiphany is almost purely passive and feminine; the three Thomistic terms, *integritas*, *consonantia*, *claritas*,

<sup>46</sup> See Hazard Adams' excellent article, "Yeatsian Art and Mathematic Form," *The Centennial Review*, IV (Winter, 1960), 70-88. Adams rightly stresses Yeats' ultimate concern with form analogous to mathematics, while allowing for the poet's steady recourse to human experience. But to the "experiential aspect of [Greek] art . . . embodying . . . the intuitional concrete and the mathematical abstract" (p. 78) something may be added. Yeats once wrote: "Art bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrinks from what Blake calls mathematic form . . ." (*Essays*, p. 362). And art bids us engage in these sensory activities by challenging pictorial rest with dramatic gesture, by an *aesthetic* resolution between measured form and passionate action.

<sup>47</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Wheels and Butterflies* (London, 1934), p. 126.

<sup>48</sup> *Essays*, p. 301.

<sup>49</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 286. Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London, 1957), has treated some of these aesthetic problems in Yeats more from an historical point of view.

<sup>50</sup> *Essays*, p. 284.

which he translated as "wholeness, harmony, and radiance," omit entirely any reference to the moving power of art. Yeats early turned to seek the reassurance that a theory of cycles easily provided, for the circle contained but never denied movement: Yeats' gyres always move toward or away from a center. The overemphasis on pictorial pattern that Yeats recognized in himself as a residue of the 'nineties, which in turn had taken over the intricacies of Victorian "design," promised to keep poetry in a kind of lingering trance. And Keats' solution of the suspended action in the pictures on the urn became eventually unbearable. When Yeats called the picture, with its static fixity, "effeminate," he was speaking for the repressed aggressiveness of masculinity, movement toward an aim, arrival at a terminus—activity beyond Joyce's passivity.

Perhaps one of Yeats' late poems, "A Bronze Head," best illustrates how the poet managed at last to fuse picture and gesture, turbulence and stillness, the intensity that rouses to passion. Essentially the poem attempts to explore the possibly superhuman qualities of Maud Gonne, at whose bronze head Yeats is apparently gazing as he stands at the entrance to the museum. At first he sees only "a bird's round eye, / Everything else withered and mummy-dead." The circle of the eye dominates and holds his vision until it seems to grow so wide that the following lines repeat in essence the same image (a center surrounded by empty space), only in vast proportions:

What great tomb-haunter sweeps the distant sky  
(Something may linger there though all else die;)  
And finds there nothing to make its terror less  
*Hysterica passio* of its own emptiness?

But once she was not so immense: "her form [was] all full," though in human terms. Yet already the poet saw circle within circle, saw a "sterner eye [that] looked through her eye," an eye with sight powerful enough to survey the whole passing scene of the world's decline. In the words "Heroic reverie," which appear in the penultimate line of the poem, Yeats suggests the synthesis of passion and intensity that brings to one final image both the drive and the repose of the poem: the image is the eye, which stares so hard it seems almost to be staring beyond reality at nothing, like the eyes of Sargent's Wilson; but half in terror, half in exultation, fixed by its merciless stare and yet passionate by means of that very stare, the eye is alive after all: the bronze head—like the poem—assumes the depth and vigor of the Strozzi portrait.

A year after the discussion on "imitation," Yeats turned more

sharply than he ever had in the direction of "personal utterance," in theory and in practice. Nourished by his experience with drama, he was now able to assume again the role of lyric poet, convinced that he had learned the secrets of strength, the recklessness of extravagance, that will keep his art personal but not egotistical; dramatic but not therefore deprived of all lyricism; symbolic—still that—but not vague or abstract. Once more, and with increasing emphasis, he subscribed to the union of picture and gesture, only now the equilibrium would apply beyond the drama to the whole province of poetry. His faith, he wrote in 1913, is in ecstasy; the commitment came as a relief, for at last he could utter the word without fear of invoking the gooseflesh response of Pater's aesthetic imperative. He had made himself a context. "Of recent years," he wrote in the same letter, "instead of 'vision,' meaning by vision the intense realization of a definite imagined region, I have tried for more self-portraiture . . . to make my work convincing with a speech so natural and dramatic that the hearer would feel the presence of a man thinking and feeling." It was not a new resolve; early in life he had felt that he was essentially a portrait painter, setting up his *dramatis personae* against a background as if he were painting them on a canvas. Only this time his plans were motivated by an urgency that assured success; with "The Wild Swans of Coole" came a different poetic voice—and voice, to change to another art, is after all the proper word. Two kinds of poetry, he concluded in this letter, have dominated literary history: the Keatsian *vision* that culminates in picture, in outer order; and the Burnsian *drama* that reveals inner disorder and struggle (though Burns, he felt, was too obvious). "It is in dramatic expression," he complained, "that English poetry is most lacking as compared with French . . . [whose poets] create a marvellous drama out of their lives."<sup>81</sup> Donne's poetry he had read the year before, with enthusiasm and envy; the drama of personal struggle he found there would force the poet into a passionate honesty that the decorative pattern of picture might delay or miscarry. And it is precisely this passionate quality of honesty in Yeats' later poetry—deliberately and aesthetically wrought—that has earned him the reputation of a dramatic lyricist. In the full context of his artistic life the drama was, for all its attendant excitement, a palliative for Yeats' anxiety over the threat of abstractions: "For ten or twelve years . . . I suffered continual remorse, and only became content when my abstractions had composed themselves into picture and dramatisation."<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> *Letters*, p. 583.

<sup>82</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 115-116. Italics mine.

## *Endangering the Reader's Neck: Background Description in the Novel*

*We want, I think, very much a Discourse on Description,  
carried through all the Species of Writing. To show us from  
what Objects, and how, to draw the finest Circumstances*  
—Thomas Purney, Preface to *Pastorals* (1717)

In spite of the establishment of the novel in a dominant position by the middle of the nineteenth century, it is only in the last fifty years that there has been any really profitable discussion of its nature and processes. Even so, one aspect of the novelist's art, the role and technique of background description, has been somewhat neglected. Book after book can be read, broadcast after broadcast can be listened to, without the subjects, ever coming up. The moral purpose of the novelist, the nature of the hero, the novel as epic or symbol or what you will, these topics are discussed with unfailing regularity. But the critic who does more than make a conventional nod in the direction of Egdon Heath or the environs of Wuthering Heights is hardly ever to be encountered.

One reason for this neglect is that description—of a sort—is so easy to do, and so frequently done for its own sake, without relevance to the totality of the novel, that the critic avoids so obvious a field for adverse comment. Relevance, in fact, is the key, as Elizabeth Bowen has pointed out in her "Notes on Writing a Novel": "Scene is only justified in the novel where it can be shown, or at least felt, to act upon action or character. In fact, where it has dramatic use."<sup>1</sup> It is this use of relevant, dramatic description that I proposed to examine, though within the limits of this article I can do no more than sketch out the sort of approach I consider desirable.<sup>2</sup> It is easy and tempting

\*D. S. Bland, educated at Cambridge University, has published in numerous American and British learned journals. Formerly Tutor in Extra-Mural Studies, King's College (University of Durham), he is at present Assistant Director of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of Liverpool.

<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Bowen, *Collected Impressions* (London, 1950), p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>These limits compel me to confine my attention to English examples. Any extended survey would have to take account, for example, of the carpentry of

to regard descriptive passages in a novel as having little or no relation to problems of plot and character, particularly if these passages strike us as being no more than examples of "fine" writing. But we are learning to pay the same attention to "the words on the page" in a novel as in poetry and drama, and I believe that this attention, directed towards passages of background description, will show that not all of them are as irrelevant as we are sometimes led to believe.

At the same time, we have to recognize that, in its early days at least, the novel owed a great deal to the practice of the landscape painters in the matter of natural description. This relationship between the two arts has introduced a complication into our response to description in the novel which may lie behind the quite sharp division between those who enjoy description and those who find it irrelevant. The history of landscape painting shows that it succeeds in establishing itself as a fully independent genre, unrelated, in the hands of a Constable or a Cézanne, to story-telling or moral issues. When we encounter its equivalent in a novel, then, we tend, according to our temperament, either to welcome it for its own sake, finding in it those emotional satisfactions we find in painting, or to dismiss it because (such is our experience of landscape painting) it seems to have little or nothing to do with the things that the novel ought to be doing.

Because of this complication, therefore, I shall confine my examination entirely to landscape description. But before turning to the influence of landscape painting on the novel I must draw attention to one recent book, Mr. Robert Liddell's *Treatise on the Novel*, which does indeed broach the subject of description, but only to dismiss it as a side issue.

The aesthetics of descriptive writing have not yet received sufficient attention—it is commonly held in too great esteem, particularly when it occurs in works of fiction. Painting or music that has a strong literary element is now severely criticised. It is time for an attack to be made upon the pictorial element in literature. Mr. Richards, in *Practical Criticism*, has done much to teach us not to look for "pictures" in Poetry—nevertheless, the Novel is still in need of a purge.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Liddell makes a relevant point when he says that descriptive writing is generally too much esteemed by the reader. It is this esteem

Balzac's theatre-workshop, the panoramic range of Tolstoy, the *genius loci* of Henry James, and the subjective intensity of Proust.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Liddell, *A Treatise on the Novel* (London, 1947), p. 110.

which once exalted Mary Webb and which can still miss the true nature of Conrad's achievement. Nevertheless, background description is there in the novel, and has been from the very beginning of its development, and must be taken into account in any comprehensive account of its nature and achievements. I do not wish to suggest that there is anything to be gained by rhapsodising over the "beauties" of a description, particularly when the passage can be detached from the novel without doing much damage to its fabric. But equally, I think, Mr. Liddell is wrong to go so far to the other extreme and ask for nothing more than the sign-posting we get in Elizabethan stage-directions: "a street in London," "another part of the forest"—a map-reference sufficient to enable us to orientate ourselves, but no more. He argues as follows: "Too many stage-directions are boring and confusing if we read a play; if we see them carried out on the stage, the result is a fussy and undignified ritualism. They are worst of all in a novel."<sup>4</sup>

This view can be countered immediately. In his recent study, *The Rise of the Novel*, Professor Ian Watt has shown that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the novel is that it gives its personages "a local habitation and a name." Robinson Crusoe, Pamela Andrews, Tom Jones, these normal forms are distinct from the single names of older heroes and heroines, Macbeth, Portia, and from the type-names of allegory, such as Mr. Badman. The novelist's characters are contemporary figures, moving in a solid world of everyday life. In the more timeless worlds of tragic or comic drama it does not matter that the characters are not so localised. Very often, in fact, they cannot be. In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* we are told that the wood is near Athens, but it turns out to be peopled with very English artisans and fairies. But even if there were not this point to be made about the localisation of characters in a novel, Mr. Liddell could still be criticised for equating too rigidly the stage-direction and the novel's descriptive passages. Properly used, the latter are rather to be equated with the dramatically presented descriptions that we get from the *characters* in a drama. While many of these arise from the nature of the Elizabethan stage and are merely utilitarian, others of them have a deeper significance. Thus, when Duncan and Banquo describe Macbeth's castle, they are certainly letting us know where we are supposed to be; but phrases like "a pleasant seat" and "the air is delicate" have a dramatic irony that lifts the description beyond utility.

<sup>4</sup> Liddell, p. 112.

As I have indicated, the approach I propose to make towards an examination of the place of description in the novel involves some consideration of landscape painting as an independent genre. The situation is similar to that obtaining in the realm of descriptive poetry. That is, the work of the painter comes first and educates the eyes of the writer.<sup>5</sup>

Professor Watt's point about the localisation of the setting in the pioneer English novels is perfectly valid; but description is put to other uses than this, and it is with the development of these uses that I am concerned. Localisation is a practical matter of placing the characters in an environment within which they can act out their stories. It is equivalent of both the dramatically presented description and the stage scenery of the drama. Thus the interest attaching to Crusoe's island is that of seeing what he can make of it. It is far from being a romantic Treasure Island or Blue Lagoon. In Pamela's case we must be made aware that Mr. B's house has closets to which she can retire to write her letters or avoid a rape. And in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* a distinction must be made between a good inn and a bad one, between Allworthy's orderly house and Squire Western's free-and-easy one. The nearest we come in Fielding's work to a piece of natural description for its own sake is a short passage in *Joseph Andrews*.

Adams continued his subject till they came to one of the beautifullest spots of ground in the universe. It was a kind of natural amphitheatre, formed by the winding of a small rivulet, which was planted with thick woods, and the trees rose gradually above each other by the natural ascent of the ground they stood on; which ascent as they hid with their boughs, they seemed to have been disposed by the design of the most skilful planter. The soil was spread with a verdure which no paint could imitate; and the whole place might have raised romantic ideas in elder minds than those of Joseph and Fanny, without the assistance of love (Bk. III, Chap. V).

But even this, as we shall see, is not "pure" description, though it will appear to be alongside the picture we are given in *Tom Jones* of Allworthy's house and estate, which is much more in line with eighteenth-century taste in landscape description:

It stood on the south-east side of a hill, but nearer the bottom than the top of it, so as to be sheltered from the north-east

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Princeton, 1958).

by a grove of old oaks which rose above it in a gradual ascent of near half a mile, and yet high enough to enjoy a most charming prospect of the vale beneath.

In the midst of the grove was a fine lawn, sloping down towards the house, near the summit of which rose a plentiful spring, gushing out of a rock covered with firs, and forming a constant cascade of about thirty feet, not carried down a regular flight of steps, but tumbling in a natural fall over the broken and mossy stones until it came to the bottom of the rock, then running off in a pebbly channel, that with many lesser falls winded along, till it fell into a lake at the foot of the hill, about a quarter of a mile below the house on the south side, and which was seen from every room in the front. Out of this lake, which filled the center of a beautiful plain, embellished with groups of beeches and elms, and fed with sheep, issued a river, that for several miles was seen to meander through an amazing variety of meadows and woods till it emptied itself into the sea, with a large arm of which, and an island beyond it, the prospect was closed.

On the right of this valley opened another of less extent, adorned with several villages, and terminated by one of the towers of an old ruined abby, grown over with ivy, and part of the front, which remained still entire.

The left-hand side presented the view of a very fine park, composed of very unequal ground, and agreeably varied with all the diversity that hills, lawns, wood, and water, laid out with admirable taste, but owing less to art than to nature, could give. Beyond this, the country gradually rose into a ridge of wild mountains, the tops of which were above the clouds (Bk. I, Chap. IV).

The significance of the chapter-heading here should not be overlooked: "The reader's neck brought into danger by a description." Here Fielding is apparently warning us to expect something unusual, but what in fact he offers us is something to which no good Augustan would take exception. Allworthy's estate displays the expected taste of an eighteenth-century landowner who has accepted the changes in landscape gardening brought about by the influence of painters such as Poussin and Claude. What Fielding gives us is not a piece of natural description for its own sake (this *would* have brought the reader's neck into danger in the middle of the century) but the panorama of a situation in which nature is so manipulated as to form a setting for

man.<sup>6</sup> We are here at a transitional stage between the complete formality of the continental garden of the seventeenth century, and the appreciation of *natural* nature that is to be a characteristic of the Romantic movement. It is on the principles of this transitional stage that Pope laid out his five-acre plot at Twickenham, and the river that meanders through Allworthy's estate is at one with Hogarth's "line of beauty," the serpentine line that has given its name to the ornamental water in Hyde Park. How transitional the situation was can be seen by comparing the close of the passage from *Tom Jones* with the paragraph from *Joseph Andrews*. In the latter the trees are approved of because "they seemed to have been disposed by the design of the most skilful planter," whereas in *Tom Jones* the left-hand scene pleases because it owes *less* to art than to nature.

Fielding's object in going into such detail should now be obvious. By this means he both places Allworthy on the social map and displays his character, that of a quiet-living man of taste, in contrast to Squire Western, of whose estate we get no such picture. In *Joseph Andrews* the description is used for another purpose. The charm of the natural amphitheatre chimes in with and underlines the romantic mood of the lovers, and this, the use of "mood" landscape, is the next stage in the development of description in the novel. In each case, however, the reader is being invited to participate by being reminded of visual experiences with which Fielding supposes him to be familiar, experiences derived from his acquaintance with neo-classical landscape painting and the garden-design based on it.

Both Poussin and Claude had painted "mood" landscapes; in Claude's case, a mood of calm contemplation of an idealised Nature. In the hands of Salvator Rosa the mood becomes wildly picturesque, inducing feelings of awe and terror. From looking at pictures of this sort it is only a step to seeking for passages in literature in which the thrill can be experienced. This demand was met by the writers of the novel of terror, and the extent to which they relied on what had been done by the landscape painters is indicated by the following passage from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in which Mrs. Radcliffe gives the game away completely:

---

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Christopher Hussey has suggested that "the man-made humanised landscape" of the eighteenth century is "England's greatest contribution to the visual arts of the world." See his introduction to Margaret Jourdain, *The Work of William Kent* (London, 1948), p. 15. His introduction to the companion volume, Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown* (London, 1950, rev. 1957), should also be

The scene of barrenness was here and there interrupted by the spreading branches of the larch and cedar, which threw their gloom over the cliff, or athwart the torrent that rolled in the vale. No living creature appeared—except the lizard scrambling among the rocks, and often hanging upon points so dangerous that fancy shrunk from the view of them. This was such a scene as Salvator would have chosen, had he then existed, for his canvass. St. Aubert, impressed by the romantic character of the place, almost expected to see banditti start from behind some projecting rock, and he kept his hand upon the arms with which he always travelled (Chap. III).

There is no question that Salvator Rosa would have painted such a scene. He *had* painted it, not once but many times, and without his example Mrs. Radcliffe might have written very differently. Here we have something that is characteristic of the very essence of *Udolpho*. Even Mr. Liddell would hardly claim that the novel would still be what it is if such passages were reduced to mere stage-directions.

Another characteristic passage is to be found in the prototype of the novel of terror, *The Castle of Otranto*:

Theodore at length determined to repair to the forest that Matilda had pointed out to him. Arriving there, he sought the gloomiest shades, as best suited to the pleasing melancholy that reigned in his mind. In this mood he roved insensibly to the caves which had formerly served as a retreat to hermits, and were now reported round the country to be haunted by evil spirits.

In *Joseph Andrews* "one of the beautifullest spots of ground in the universe" happens to accord with the mood of Fanny and Joseph. But Horace Walpole's Theodore actually seeks a setting for his melancholy, and this deliberate association of mood and situation with setting remains a staple feature of fictional description thereafter. This is particularly the case in the nineteenth century. In Disraeli's *Henrietta Temple* (close of Book III) and in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (first narrative, section XV), for example, the settings are in perfect accord with the emotional crises of the story. In better novels this manipulation rises to the level of symbol, as in the use made of the chestnut tree in *Jane Eyre*. Under it, on a balmy evening, Jane

consulted. The two together form an excellent analysis of the aesthetics of landscape gardening.

and Rochester become engaged. During the night that follows, it is blasted in a storm. At an earlier period in our literature this would have been an omen merely. Here it is both omen and symbol. The hitherto solid growth is split into two halves. Nor did this use of the device die out with the passing of the Victorian novel. It has been used quite recently by L. P. Hartley in the symbolic deadly-nightshade plant in *The Go-Between*.

In Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe the situation is, of course, deliberately rigged, and it was therefore easy for Jane Austen to poke fun at the practice in *Northanger Abbey*, particularly as her own tendency in landscape description (as in other aspects of her work) is to look back to a central eighteenth-century position. Now Jane Austen is a writer whom Mr. Liddell especially admires for her restraint in landscape description, so it is worth while pausing to examine her practice in some detail.

We may take as typical of her normal practice the following passage from *Emma*:

Their road to this detached cottage was down Vicarage Lane, a lane leading at right angles from the broad though irregular main street of the place; and, as may be inferred, containing the blessed abode of Mr. Elton. A few inferior dwellings were first to be passed, and then, about a quarter of a mile down the lane, rose the vicarage; an old and not very good house, almost as close to the road as it could be (Vol. I, Chap. X).<sup>7</sup>

Here every word is utilitarian, with the exception of the ironically used "blessed," and the passage adequately meets Mr. Liddell's call for description that is no more than a map-reference.

But Jane Austen does not always work at this level of utility. Some of her descriptions can be very subtle indeed, and careful reading is required to pierce the surface of restraint. Of this subtlety the following passage will serve as an example:

It was hot; and after walking some time over the gardens in a scattered, dispersed way, scarcely any three together, they insensibly followed one another to the delicious shade of a broad short avenue of limes, which stretching beyond the garden at an equal distance from the river, seemed the finish of the pleasure grounds. It led to nothing; nothing but a view

<sup>7</sup> My quotations are taken from the standard Oxford edition, edited by R. W. Chapman.

at the end over a low stone wall with high pillars, which seemed intended, in their erection, to give the appearance of an approach to the house, which had never been there. Disputable, however, as might be the taste of such a termination, it was in itself a charming walk, and the view which closed it extremely pretty. The considerable slope, at nearly the foot of which the Abbey stood, gradually acquired a steeper form beyond its grounds; and at half a mile distant was a bank of considerable abruptness and grandeur, well clothed with wood; and at the bottom of this bank, favourably placed and sheltered, rose the Abbey-Mill Farm, with meadows in front, and the river making a close and handsome curve around it.

It was a sweet view—sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive (*Emma*, Vol. III, Chap. VI).

The close of this passage certainly puts the manipulation of Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe in its place. But though the whole scene has much in common with Fielding (Mr. Allworthy would have felt quite at home here), there is something more to it.<sup>8</sup> The description is divided equally between the Abbey grounds and the Abbey-Mill Farm. Now the latter, of course, is where Robert Martin lives, the farmer whose interest in Harriet Smith has been thwarted by Emma. This description, said Mr. Wilson, helps to "point up" Emma's mistaken and snobbish view of him. In her eyes he is only a common farmer, unfit to be the husband of a Woodhouse protégée. But through the eyes of Jane Austen herself we are able, in this description, to see Martin at his proper level, the respectable level of the successful yeoman farmer, a rank which Jane Austen herself by no means despised. It is the view of the farm which is sweet and English, and the air of restraint in the closing sentence, though owing something to an eighteenth-century dislike of "enthusiasm," is also appropriate for placing Martin in the social order. Were he a degree lower, he would be indifferent to appearances. A degree higher, and he too would have gone in for "improvements," and would then have run the risk of producing the effect of pretentiousness which is criticised in the description of the Abbey estate of Mr. Knightley. This use of the description is of greater importance than the impression which a first or superficial reading of the last sentence will arouse—the impression of a prim withdrawal from the temptations of natural description.

\* In what follows here I am indebted to some points made by Mr. Edmund Wilson in a talk on the B.B.C. a few years ago.

This is not to deny that Jane Austen is chary of description. Her attitude in this matter is bound up with her criticism of the "improvements" of the Abbey estate, a criticism which has parallels elsewhere in her work. Thus, the panorama of Bath is humorously dismissed in *Northanger Abbey* for its failure to conform to the picturesque standards of landscape beauty; an element of Marianne's "sensibility" is a belief in those standards; and in *Mansfield Park* considerable areas of the dialogue are given over to discussing improvements. There is no doubt where Jane Austen stands in this matter. It is on the side of restraint; understandably so, when a lack of restraint which had its origin in the same fashionable taste for the picturesque could lead to the over-emphasis of Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptive passages.

It is sometimes claimed that Jane Austen let herself go beyond her normal limits in her treatment of Fanny Price's Portsmouth environment in *Mansfield Park*. Here, indeed, she goes into far more detail than she usually permits herself. But it is not detail in isolation. Cramped living rooms, deficiency of manners, lack of privacy and paucity of books, all the details are intermingled in a picture which is meant to provide a counterbalance to *Mansfield Park*. Only once in this part of the novel does Jane Austen seem to depart from this strict obedience to the needs of relevance:

The day was uncommonly lovely. It was really March, but it was April in its mild air, brisk soft wind, and bright sun, occasionally clouded for a minute; and everything looked so beautiful under the influence of such a sky, the effect of the shadows pursuing each other, on the ships at Spithead and the island beyond, with the ever-varying hues of the sea now at high water, dancing in its glee and dashing against the ramparts with so fine a sound, produced altogether such a combination of charms for Fanny, as made her gradually almost careless of the circumstances under which she felt them (Vol. III, Chap. XI).

At first it seems that Jane Austen has for once looked at a scene with a painter's eye rather than a novelist's. Even here, however, we are carefully brought back to situation. When our first surprise is over, the passage begins to look something like the Radcliffian concordance of place and mood. What more can Fanny want than a fine day, her family in their Sunday best, and her arm in Henry Crawford's? But the circumstances of which she is almost careless are not of a piece with this idyllic situation:

Nay, had she been without his arm, she would have soon known that she needed it, for she wanted strength for a two hour's saunter of this kind, coming as it generally did upon a week's previous inactivity. Fanny was beginning to feel the effect of being debarred from her usual, regular exercise; she had lost ground as to health since her being in Portsmouth, and but for Mr. Crawford and the beauty of the weather, would soon have been knocked up now.

Above all, Crawford is not Edmund, even though he is improving upon acquaintance. And so it finally appears that description here is not being used to enhance situation, as in Mrs. Radcliffe, but to act as a foil to it, and to that end some expansiveness of detail is necessary.

What Jane Austen withdraws from, then, is the artificiality of the *Udolpho* use of description. She does not withdraw from description which is organic, description which reveals character, mood and situation. Sir Walter Scott had no such scruples. Like Mrs. Radcliffe (from whom he probably learned) he will use a dramatic setting if it suits his purpose, and he is as aware as she is of the influence on vision of the work of the picturesque painters:

If India be the land of magic . . . this is the country of romance. The scenery is such as nature brings together in her sublimest moods; sounding cataracts—hills which rear their scathed heads to the sky—lakes that, winding up the shadowy valleys, lead at every turn to yet more romantic recesses—rocks which catch the clouds of heaven. All the wildness of Salvator here, and there the fairy scenes of Claude (*Guy Mannering*, Chap. XVII).

But in his best work he goes further than Mrs. Radcliffe in that he does not invent such settings, or take them at second-hand from paintings. He uses what is actually present. This comes out clearly in the description of Jeanie Deans' moonlight meeting with the mysterious Wilson, in *The Heart of Midlothian* (Chap. XV):

It was situated in the depth of the valley behind Salisbury Crag, which has for a background the north-western shoulder of the mountain called Arthur's Seat, on whose descent still remain the ruins of what was once a chapel or hermitage, dedicated to Saint Anthony the Eremite. A better site for such a building could hardly have been selected; for the chapel, situated among the rude and pathless cliffs, lies in a desert,

even in the immediate vicinity of a rich, populous, and tumultuous capital: and the hum of the city might mingle with the orisons of the recluses, conveying as little of worldly interest as if it had been the roar of the distant ocean. Beneath the steep ascent on which these ruins are still visible, was, and perhaps is still pointed out, the place where the wretch Nicol Muschat, who has been already mentioned in these pages, had closed a long scene of cruelty towards his unfortunate wife, by murdering her, with circumstances of uncommon barbarity. The execration in which the man's crime was held extended itself to the place where it was perpetrated, which was marked by a small cairn, or heap of stones, composed of those which each chance passenger had thrown there in testimony of abhorrence, and on the principle, it would seem, of the ancient British malediction, "May you have a cairn for your burial-place!"

As our heroine approached this ominous and unhallowed spot, she paused and looked to the moon, now rising broad on the north-west, and shedding a more distinct light than it had afforded during her walk thither. Eyeing the planet for a moment, she then slowly and fearfully turned her head towards the cairn, from which it was at first averted. She was at first disappointed. Nothing was visible beside the little pile of stones, which shone grey in the moonlight. A multitude of confused suggestions rushed on her mind. Had her correspondent deceived her, and broken his appointment?—was he too tardy at the appointment he had made?—or had some strange turn of fate prevented him from appearing as he proposed?—or, if he were an unearthly being, as her secret apprehensions suggested, was it his object merely to delude her with false hopes, and put her to unnecessary toil and terror, according to the nature, as she had heard, of those wandering demons?—or did he propose to blast her with the sudden horrors of his presence when she had come close to the place of rendezvous? These anxious reflections did not prevent her approaching to the cairn with a pace that, though slow, was determined.

The language is that of Mrs. Radcliffe—"ominous and unhallowed," "sudden horrors"—but the details of the setting are not fictional, and the occasion of the meeting at such a place and hour is not merely designed to make the reader's flesh creep (though such a motive is of course involved) but is a logical outcome of the situation in which

Wilson is placed. Some manipulation of mood and circumstance there certainly is, but there is no law which says that a creative artist shall not manipulate his material. The most we can do is to condemn him if he fails to bring it off, and Scott can successfully plead "not guilty" on this occasion, as on many others.

A subsequent writer who does not always get away with it is Dickens. Much of his description is utilitarian scene-setting, as it is in the work of his eighteenth-century masters, and here his selection of what is relevant and characteristic is usually under control. But he is also one of the first English novelists (if not the first) to raise description to a symbolic level, and when he does so he runs much greater risks. The opening of *Bleak House* is justly famous for its transition from the actual level of a London "pea-souper" to the symbolic fog at the heart of the High Court of Chancery. By contrast, the attempt to make the rain and floods in this novel symbolise the desolation of Lady Deadlock must be adjudged a failure. As a piece of pure description the passage is well enough done:

The waters are out in Lincolnshire. An arch of the bridge in the park has been sapped and sopped away. The adjacent low-lying ground, for half a mile in breadth, is a stagnant river, with melancholy trees for islands in it, and a surface punctured all over, all day long, with falling rain. . . . The weather, for many a day and night, has been so wet that the trees seem wet through, and the soft loppings and prunings of the workman's axe can make no crash or crackle as they fall. The deer, looking soaked, leave quagmires, where they pass. The shot of a rifle loses its sharpness in the moist air, and its smoke moves in a tardy little cloud towards the green rise, coppice-topped, that makes a background for the falling rain.

I agree with Mr. Liddell's view of this passage. What spoils its adequacy as symbol is not the quality of the description itself, but the situation, the melodramatic situation, which it is intended to emphasize.

No particular principle lay behind my original choice of examples to illustrate this article, beyond that of relevance, but it so happens that a pattern of ebb and flow in the effectiveness of these passages does emerge. We began with the utilitarian description required by the novel to localise its characters and their actions to a degree not met with in the older narrative or dramatic forms. The next stage was to place the character in his social setting, as well as within a

geographical one, and then followed the manipulation of landscape in the novel of terror to suit the emotions and situations of the characters. This may not seem very effective to us, and the fashion for the novel of terror among the educated classes did not last very long. One would hesitate to attribute its decline to *Northanger Abbey* alone; but Jane Austen does come out strongly against it, and returns to description used as a means of social placing. Scott, however, continues to use atmospheric description (though he does so more naturally than Mrs. Radcliffe) because the nature of his work requires it. Finally, description rises to the level of symbolism in Dickens.

In my next example, the current changes once more. No one could be more utilitarian than Trollope, no one less likely to be suspected of rigging the description to suit a mood or to fashion a symbol. His general level of achievement can be illustrated by the account of Hiram's Hospital in the first chapter of *The Warden*:

Hiram's Hospital, as the retreat is called, is a picturesque building enough, and shows the correct taste with which the ecclesiastical architects of those days were imbued. It stands on the banks of the little river, which flows nearly round the cathedral close, being on the side furthest from the town. The London road crosses the river by a pretty one-arched bridge, and, looking from this bridge, the stranger will see the windows of the old men's rooms, each pair of windows separated by a small buttress. A broad gravel walk runs between the building and the river, which is always trim and cared for; and at the end of the walk, under the parapet of the approach to the bridge, is a large and well-worn seat, on which, in mild weather, three or four of Hiram's bedesmen are sure to be seen seated. Beyond this row of buttresses, and further from the bridge, and also further from the water which here suddenly bends, are the pretty oriel windows of Mr. Harding's house, and his well-mown lawn. The entrance to the hospital is from the London road, and is made through a ponderous gateway under a heavy stone arch, unnecessary, one would suppose, at any time, for the protection of twelve old men, but greatly conducive to the good appearance of Hiram's charity. On passing through this portal, never closed to anyone from six a. m. till ten p. m., and never open afterwards, except on application to a huge, intricately hung, medieval bell, the handle of which no uninitiated intruder can possibly find, the six doors of the old men's abodes are seen, and beyond them is a slight iron screen, through which the more happy

portion of the Barchester elite pass into the Elysium of Mr. Harding's dwelling.

Everything in this passage, with one exception, is devoted to the business of localisation, a rough test of which is whether one can draw a map or make a picture from the data. Here the facts are more than adequate for this purpose. The exception is the word "Elysium." Like the adjective "blessed" in the description of Mr. Elton's house, it is a means of connecting utilitarian description with the immediate situation of the characters. It points the contrast between the situation of the bedesmen, kept strictly to the letter of Hiram's will, and the happier lot of the Warden. The two areas are separated by a screen; a slight screen, it is true, but one of iron nevertheless, a barrier which shuts these poor Adams out of Paradise. And further, there is an irony on "Elysium," because the peace for which it stands is about to be rudely invaded by the forces of reform.

If this example is a regression, the next is so subtle and complicated that it can almost stand as a summary of the various uses to which description can be put:

On a grey but dry November morning Dorothea drove to Lowick in company with her uncle and Celia. Mr. Casaubon's home was the manor-house. Close by, visible from some parts of the garden, was the little church, with the old parsonage opposite. In the beginning of his career, Mr. Casaubon had only held the living, but the death of his brother had put him in possession of the manor also. It had a small park, with a fine old oak here and there, and an avenue of limes towards the south-west front, with a sunk fence between park and pleasure-ground, so that from the drawing-room windows the glance swept uninterruptedly along a slope of greensward till the limes ended in a level of corn and pastures, which often seemed to melt into a lake under the setting sun. This was the happy side of the house, for the south and east looked rather melancholy even under the brightest morning. The grounds here were more confined, the flower-beds showed no careful tendance, and large clumps of trees, chiefly of sombre yews, had risen high, not ten yards from the windows. The building, of greenish stone, was in the old English style, not ugly, but small windowed and melancholy-looking; the sort of house that must have children, many flowers, open windows, and little vistas of bright things, to make it seem a joyous home. In this latter end of autumn, with a sparse

remnant of yellow leaves falling slowly athwart the dark evergreens in a stillness without a sunshine, the house too had an air of autumnal decline, and Mr. Casaubon, when he presented himself, had no bloom that could be thrown into relief by that background (*Middlemarch*, Book I, Chap. IX).

Here, obviously, is localisation. We know where we are and could paint the scene. Here too are the remains of the man-made, man-centred landscape of the eighteenth century in the mention of the avenue of limes and the sunk fence, and the (probably unconscious) glance back to the paintings of Claude: "a level of corn and pastures, which often seemed to melt into a lake under the setting sun." Added to this is a selection of detail and colour which helps to present character and situation. Casaubon is at one with the autumnal decline; like the November morning, he too is grey and dry. The choice of season is deliberate, and provides an emphasis which is parallel to the concordance of mood and scene which we have noted in the novel of terror, but raised here by George Eliot to the level of symbol. The happy side of the house stands for the sort of life that Dorothea will renounce in her marriage; there will be no children, no vistas of bright things on her side of the house of marriage.

All this, however, is still in the future, and we need to be reminded of the situation again when Dorothea and Casaubon are actually married. George Eliot does this in describing their arrival at Lowick after the honeymoon, and the bright contrasts in the final sentence leave us in no doubt that Dorothea has reached the winter of her discontent:

Mr. and Mrs. Casaubon, returning from their wedding journey, arrived at Lowick Manor in the middle of January. A light snow was falling as they descended at the door, and in the morning, when Dorothea passed from her dressing-room into the blue-green boudoir that we know of, she saw the long avenue of limes lifting their trunks from a white earth, and spreading white branches against the dun and motionless sky. The distant flat shrank in uniform whiteness and low-hanging uniformity of cloud. The very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before; the stag in the tapestry looked more like a ghost in his ghostly blue-green world; the volumes of polite literature in the bookcase looked more like immovable imitations of books. The bright fire of dry oak-boughs burning on the dogs seemed an incongruous renewal of life and glow—like the figure of Dorothea herself as she

entered carrying the red-leather cases containing the cameos for Celia (Book III, Chap. XVIII).

The same contrast of light and shade can be seen in the next example, from *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. But where the passages from *Middlemarch* look back to the restrained landscapes of Claude, Hardy's description continues many features of the Salvator Rosa landscape, and the cult of the picturesque which it inspired:

These precincts embodied the mournful phases of Casterbridge life, as the south avenues embodied its cheerful moods. The whole way along here was sunless, even in summer time; in spring, white frosts lingered here when other places were steaming with warmth; while in winter it was the seed-field of all the aches, rheumatisms, and torturing cramps of the year. The Casterbridge doctors must have pined away for want of sufficient nourishment, but for the configuration of the landscape on the north-eastern side.

The river—slow, noiseless, and dark,—the Schwarzwasser of Casterbridge—ran beneath a low cliff, the two together forming a defence which had rendered walls and artificial earth-works on this side unnecessary. Here were ruins of a Franciscan priory, and a mill attached to the same, the water of which roared down a back-hatch like the voice of desolation. Above the cliff, and behind the river, rose a pile of buildings, and in the front of the pile a square mass cut into the sky. It was like a pedestal lacking its statue. This missing feature, without which the design remained incomplete, was, in truth, the corpse of a man; for the square mass formed the base of the gallows, the extensive buildings at the back being the county goal. In the meadow where Henchard now walked the mob were wont to gather whenever an execution took place, and there to the tune of the roaring weir they stood and watched the spectacle.

The exaggeration which darkness imparted to the glooms of this region impressed Henchard more than he had expected. The lugubrious harmony of the spot with his domestic situation was too perfect for him, impatient of effects, scenes and adumbrations. It reduced his heartburning to melancholy, and he exclaimed, "Why the deuce did I come here!" He went on past the cottage in which the old local hangman had lived and died, in times before that calling was monopolized all over England by a single gentleman; and climbed up by a steep back lane into the town (Chap. XIX).

Good as it is, this passage is a retrogressive step. Like Mrs. Radcliffe, Hardy gives the game away and admits to manipulation when he tells us how much the scene harmonised with Henchard's mood. All the same, the thing is better done than it is by Disraeli or Wilkie Collins, partly because, as with Scott, the locality is actual and not imagined.

But the time has come to sum up. The nature of the novel, in its beginnings, was such that a greater degree of localisation of the characters was required than in the older literary forms, because these characters were less universal, more closely related to their own day and age. This localisation was achieved by setting them in a solidly constructed environment. But it is not long before description is being used more widely, to reveal, first, general characteristics, and then particular moods. There is not much point in telling the reader that So-and-so felt melancholy and leaving it at that. In drama participation in the moods of the characters is achieved through the direct contact between actor and audience, and is embodied in action, in pauses and tones of voice, and so forth. But participation in the novel is much less direct (we read it all in our own internal tone of voice, for example) and one way to make the connection is through the evocative power of descriptive passages. Here, as we have seen, the novelist was able to learn something from the development of landscape painting at this time.<sup>9</sup>

Next, description can rise to the level of symbol, and so stand for more than the writer expresses directly, or else express in succinct

\* It is worth noting that painting is still having an influence on the descriptive powers of the novelist in our own day. The following passage is taken from Virginia Woolf's *Between The Acts*: "The roof was weathered red-orange; and inside it was a hollow hall, sunshafted, brown, smelling of corn, dark when the doors were shut, but splendidly illuminated when the doors at the end stood open, as they did, to let the wagons in—the long, low wagons, like ships of the sea, breasting the corn, not the sea, returning in the evening, shagged with hay." If we compare this with Jane Austen's passage describing Mr. Elton's house we can see a decisive change from utility to evocation; and evocation, I would suggest, is a dominant characteristic of contemporary fictional description, and can be found at its best in the work of women novelists like Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamund Lehmann and Iris Murdoch. It is not too much to say that, in Virginia Woolf's case, she would not have written quite as she did without the example of the Impressionists before her, and without the modification of visual awareness which their work brought about. We remember in this connection that her sister, Vanessa Bell, is a sensitive painter, that her brother-in-law is the critic Olive Bell, and that she was the close friend and biographer of Roger Fry.

form what otherwise might have been more laborious. And there is also that aspect of the question which has only been implicit in my discussion, an aspect put at its plainest by L. P. Hartley in *A Perfect Woman*, a novel published in 1955: "There was surely no sympathetic fallacy in the idea that the earth reflected one's own moods and that one could project oneself into it; not to have felt akin to it would have argued insensitiveness, lack of imagination" (Chap. XVIII). But everywhere the primary requirement is that of relevance, and next to relevance, refusal to rig the description. When these essentials have been observed, the descriptive passages take their place in the texture of the novel, and cannot be detached and enjoyed for their own sake, nor wished away from the novel without damaging its fabric.

*Blind Will or Blind Hero:  
Philosophy and Myth in  
Hardy's "Return of the Native"*

*Is Clym Yeobright really an interesting person?—Albert J. Guerard in the introduction to the Rinehart edition of *The Return of the Native*.*

Perhaps a more significant question than Professor Guerard's would be its corollary: Why has the hero of Thomas Hardy's most popular novel been so coolly received by leading critics? The answer lies less in Hardy's traditional reticence than in his failure to achieve conscious knowledge of his hero's basic motivation. That is not to accuse Hardy of an indifferent or perfunctory attitude toward his hero. On the contrary, his writing often reveals the strain of his efforts to create a finely wrought protagonist. Hardy expatiates upon his hero's philosophical credo, but Clym Yeobright's psychic life remains disturbingly vague. In short, Hardy has created, not a protagonist, but a puzzle.

Yeobright is described as a man whose rational and emotional selves are eternally in conflict. But why? In an effort to find out, I have analyzed the separate aspects of Clym's character. I have adduced a pattern for Clym's rational behavior in the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer. In studying psychological motivation, I have paid particular attention to Hardy's use of the Oedipus myth. And since this myth has far-reaching implications, I have surveyed the meager autobiographical material which is available. It is safe to assume that Thomas Hardy would consider all three lines of investigation irrelevant and inconclusive.

His attitude toward Arthur Schopenhauer is a case in point. As a popular purveyor of the perennial philosophy whose name was synonymous with late nineteenth century pessimism, Schopenhauer has often been considered the most likely source for Hardy's belief in unrelenting blind will. Yet when, in 1911, Helen Garwood's disser-

\* Eleanor McCann, Professor of Language Arts at San Francisco State College, earned her graduate degrees at Mills College and Stanford University and has published articles and reviews in such journals as *The Huntington Library Quarterly* and *Etc.*

tation explored this possibility, Hardy denied any extensive knowledge of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Professor Carl Weber, having studied a translation of Schopenhauer's dissertation *On the Four-Fold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, which Hardy bought in 1890, concludes otherwise. For even the most abstruse passages in Greek, Latin, French, and German in this cornerstone of Schopenhauer's philosophy are inter-larded with comments and underscorings. (It is noteworthy that, some days before his death, Hardy recorded his intention to remove all such evidence from his library.) That Hardy had earlier access to the more popular *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, published in 1819, or to the many commentaries on it in other languages, is as yet unproven, but not impossible. Schopenhauer's beliefs, like many of his sources, were public domain. Like Hardy, he had abandoned religion in favor of mythology; his blind will is hardly less a mythological figure than is Oedipus. His philosophical system provides a self-consistent rationale for those actions which are sanctioned by the conscience of Yeobright and his creator.

For man alive in a pain-ridden world, Schopenhauer sees three possible levels of adjustment: those of philosophical understanding, aesthetic appreciation, and disinterested morality. The first level is broken down into several premises to be accepted by the would-be philosopher. The first is the knowledge that life is pain correlative to cruelty. "*Homo homini lupus*": as simply as that, "man is a wolf to man." This is one of those "defects of natural laws" which render Hardy incapable of creating a hero who can relish life. To prove that happiness is negative and pain positive, the philosopher asks one to compare the feelings of the two animals while a dog is eating a cat. Hardy, too, has learned this lesson; being a novelist, he conveys it by means of impressionistic detail. One such detail leaps out from the scene in which Clym, with great brutality, drives Eustacia away from their rustic retreat: "All the life visible was in the shape of a solitary thrush cracking a small snail upon the door-stone for his breakfast."

Against the painful knowledge that all is pain, the untried, unphilosophical being will try to rebel. Hardy symbolizes this rebellion in Promethean terms. Clym's early false glow of ambition contrasts with Eustacia's unquenchability. His mother, who represents a natural, uncultivated, and not infallible bent toward philosophy, serves to dampen those fires, kindled from fear and bravado, which animate the heath folk. Clym, on the other hand, pities them for their superstitions, since his studies in Paris have refined the philosophical tendency

acquired from his mother. He is now close to an understanding of the second corollary to wisdom: that Reason is powerless against blind will. Or, as Schopenhauer the myth-creator explains, Reason is a sighted dwarf riding the shoulders of a blind giant, Will. Will itself is directionless and unimpressionable, a dark urgency directed only towards itself. Nature itself is the objectification of this Will.

And so Hardy presents the vast, overpowering heath, "a face upon which time makes but little impression." Hardy's terminology has led critics to ask another ambiguous question: Is the heath really a principal character? Philosophically speaking, the answer is yes—more so than Yeobright. From boyhood not only Clym but the heath folk have thought of him as an emanation from the heath; his final complete adjustment to it marks his attainment of "true wisdom," which is actually a recognition of irrationalism as the essence of life.

In his adjustment to the heath, Clym acknowledges the third principle of philosophic wisdom, that all is one. That is, all being, whether animate or inanimate, represents different levels of objectification of will. According to Schopenhauer, the untutored sees life according to a false *principium individuationis*. He is like "a child or a savage who looks for the first time through a glass with many facets at a flower, and marvels at the complete similarity of the innumerable flowers which he sees, and counts the leaves of each of them separately."

Just such children are the heath folk. Only to their creator and his chief character is given the awareness that all is one. Hardy takes care at the start to show how his characters merge with the all-enveloping background. The men carrying furze look like bushes on legs. When Eustacia Vye is first seen in the darkness, her form is "so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure that to see it move would have impressed the mind as a strange phenomenon," and her moody sighs are almost indistinguishable from the rustlings of the vegetation. At first Clym resists his complete immersion into the landscape: "There was something in its oppressive horizontality which too much reminded him of the arena of life; it gave him a sense of bare equality with, and no superiority to, a single living thing under the sun." But, after the purification of suffering, he relishes a rapport with the bugs and bushes. His mother is horrified to see him looking like a "parasite of the heath." Eustacia upbraids him violently, but, although Clym's physical eye is weak, his philosophical eye is keen. He reminds her that there is nothing great in the greatest of walks and nothing low in his present condition.

To those who resist its leveling force, the heath retaliates. Mrs. Yeobright, "not disinclined to philosophize," watches "independent worlds of ephemerons . . . passing their time in mad carousal." Moved by hope of reconciliation with her son, she looks with kindly eye upon the "happiness" of these least insects. But she is also a proud woman who wishes her son to rise above the heath, in whose hot grip she expires after momentary contact with a viper. Unresisting Thomasin and the reddleman, whose ability to submerge his flaming identity into the least pock mark of the heath would have confounded a chameleon, survive to marry. Eustacia accepts her *coup de grace* with belated resignation, and Wildeva is killed as he lived—by impulse. Clym survives—but half-blind and half-alive. The brief sojourn with Eustacia has left its mark on him.

The fact that Eustacia was able to inflict damage on Yeobright underscores the prevailing irony of Hardy's novel. Two remarkably clever people, they are drawn together from the start by mutual misunderstanding. Clym, so intent on inner wisdom, thinks of Eustacia as a maturing philosopher like himself, whereas Eustacia is so blind to philosophy that she doesn't even recognize it in Clym. Both are eager to delude themselves and slow to be disillusioned. Eustacia is obsessed with a desire to escape the leveling influence of the heath and climb to the top of the *haut monde*. Clym ostensibly wants a helpmate in his humanitarian services, but he also wants an escape into beauty. And Eustacia has all the outward appearance of beauty. She is also the life-force in action. Charlie, with his blind devotion, represents the same feeling which Clym has toward Eustacia, but on a more instinctual level. Charlie's suffering is more acute than that of Clym, who must keep a delicate balance between his impulsive and his reflective selves. Resentment of his mother's opposition and his vision of Eustacia as the victim of superstition tip the balance in favor of a disastrous marriage.

At this point, Clym has been exposed to the first phase of philosophical adjustment to life: a recognition of the full force of blind will. He has also achieved a temporary aesthetic escape, which proves, however, to be illusory. Near-loss of physical sight and his attachment to the heath effect an estrangement between him and Eustacia. First, her unwillingness or inability to accept his wise submissiveness forces the realization that Eustacia does not possess the true beauty of the Platonic forms. And secondly, her hatred of the heath is matched only by his love of it. And love it he must, for only the heath provides a chaste and eternal beauty to soothe the inner eye.

Higher than the level of aesthetic adjustment which Clym attains on the heath is that of moral adjustment. To Schopenhauer, this includes chastity, poverty, resignation, holiness, and self-torture. Within the restricted area of his love for Thomasin, Diggory approximates this ideal. However, Clym's disinterested love is on the broadest possible level: "Yeobright loved his kind. He had a conviction that the want of most men was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence. He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class. What was more, he was ready at once to be the first unit sacrificed. . . . He was a John the Baptist who took ennoblement rather than repentance for his text."

The life of a holy man is not easy. Others, who have not donned the hair shirt, are likely to look upon him as a tired incompetent. Of Yeobright, the villagers hold this opinion: "Some believed him, and some believed not; some said his words were commonplace, others complained of his want of doctrine; while others remarked that it was well enough for a man to take to preaching who could not see to do anything else." The loneliness of the holy man is in itself a hair shirt. Supreme irony, apparent to novelist and philosopher alike, underlies the fact that he who would be as one with all forms of life is doomed to separateness, even isolation. As he learns to be unassuming, he assumes a state of blessedness which makes him superior. Yet his superiority is free from taint, for man cannot condemn what he does not desire. As Schopenhauer concludes in *The World as Will and Idea*: "Rather do we freely acknowledge that what remains after the entire abolition of will is for all those who are still full of will certainly nothing; but, conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this world, which is so real, with all its suns and milkyways—is nothing." Such is the wisdom which Clym has attained. The novel ends as he stands before the villagers, appearing but half-blind and hollow to them, but inwardly calm, for his individual will has perished.

All this has taken place in that intellectual half of Clym's character which forces furrows onto his brow. What of the inner turmoil of unconscious motivation which can only be inferred? Mythology, the handmaiden to philosophy and psychology, may provide an answer to this question. For Hardy, who used myths to strengthen the characterization of his hero and heroine, did not deny a strangely disturbing preoccupation with mythology. In *The Notebooks* he writes:

June 16th. Reading the *Life of Goethe*. Schlegel says that "the deepest want and deficiency of all modern art lies in the fact that the artists have no mythology."

Evelyn Hardy, who edited *The Notebooks*, adds this comment:

Hardy's mind was *mythopoeic*, as well as *analytic*, and although he continually strove to *impose* the dictates of *reason*, his interest in *the occult*, in *the unconscious*, and in *myth* and legend continued to *obtrude, almost to his astonishment*. [The italics are mine.]

Whether or not he was consciously aware of what he was doing, Hardy, by means of the Oedipus myth, supplied the most significant clues to the puzzle of his hero's behavior.

Although various psychologists have extracted somewhat varying theories from the Oedipus myth, its basic elements are simple: a boy's banishment by his father, his unwitting murder of his father and marriage with his mother, his overweening determination to uncover the reason for a curse on his city, and his blinding himself in guilt and sorrow—the outward blindness leading to a sense of inward vision. Freud's interest in the myth was bolstered by his belief in traces of primordial experience which linger in the individual consciousness. The most important of these, to be re-lived during the lifetime of each individual, is the development of hatred toward the primal father and expiation of the subsequent feelings of guilt. This situation is closely akin to the oedipal conflict, in which the male child competes with the father for the love of an idealized mother. Resolution of this conflict is crucial in the development of conscience, but generally evolves from the complex family situation. If neither father nor other children are a part of that situation, the boy is hampered, but may be rescued by an aggressive girl "nice" enough to be his mother's rival. Failure of resolution results in "moral masochism." The conscience turned inward leads to cunning ways whereby the individual may sacrifice himself for "the good of society."

The self-delusion of such a person may be said to have sprung from the unremembered shock of birth and an instinctual urge to recapture intra-uterine security. Sleep serves this end—but only temporarily. Oedipus' act of putting out his eyes is more drastic and leads to the final retreat into "Mother Earth." The fact that most men do not retreat so far is due, not to rational measures, but to a counter-instinct. For the warm protectiveness of the archetypal

mother is shadowed by an archetypal fear, to be mitigated by the influence of an archetypal father. By balancing his maternal and paternal influences, the boy will escape being too submissive—or too critical toward his mother. Even so, his sentimental and familial ties, as well as any inclination toward the occult, derive from his mother, just as man-to-man relationships and political sense are influenced by his father. A hard-won awareness of instinctual motivations is the guerdon to be fought for.

*The Return of the Native* is the story of Clym Yeobright's failure to achieve such knowledge. Thus, the "will" that "has turned and denied itself" for the sake of holiness is just as surely the superego turned inward toward self-destruction. And the outcome of Hardy's sincere efforts to create a strong protagonist remains highly equivocal. One wonders how much Hardy's "mythopoeic" mind borrowed from its "unconscious"—that occult storehouse of his and mankind's earliest experiences. More specifically, what autobiographical material did he elect to include and why? And at what point in the story does he become vague about feelings and events which would embarrass even a boldly "analytical" Victorian?

Hardy himself does not encourage such speculations. In response to an inquiry about *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy denied the inclusion of autobiographic detail, saying that there was more of it in the poems than in all of the novels. A study of *The Early Life* and *The Later Years* causes one to doubt Hardy—and to remember that he and his second wife made false claims about her authorship of what is really his autobiography. Professor Weber describes Hardy's habit of hiding the manuscript of these works whenever his wife came into his sick room. He was likewise adroit in hiding or altering the raw stuff of his own experience which went into the making of Clym Yeobright.

The autobiography reveals Hardy's mother to be an ambitious, self-educated woman who prided herself on the extent of her reading and travels and chafed at the lack of ambition in husband and son. Like Mrs. Yeobright, she would doubtless have disapproved of a teaching career for her son, for she reacted strongly to the threat of his becoming a minister. Hardy's comment on the matter is reminiscent of the heath folks' attitude toward Yeobright's final goal: "Everybody said that Tommy would have to be a parson, being obviously no good for any practical pursuit, which remark caused his mother many misgivings." His unworldliness hurt her all the more because she had been "near death's door in bringing him forth."

Though generally practical and materialistic, she had, nonetheless, a rudimentary kind of philosophy, and—like Mrs. Yeobright—she strongly influenced her son's basic attitudes. Hardy writes:

October 30th. Mother's notion (and also mine)—that a figure stands in our van with arms uplifted to knock us back from any pleasant prospect we indulge in as possible.

Evelyn Hardy, who edited Hardy's notebooks, adds:

A highly suggestive note. Jemima Hardy was the driving force behind her brilliant son when he was maturing and she instilled into him her country-woman's fatalistic philosophy, together with her love of learning.

Though "fatalistic," Jemima Hardy could be a gay companion to her son. Hardy describes the "innocent glee" with which they frequently set forth on "adventures." If the adventures, as described, appear childish, they were well suited to Hardy's nature. Of himself he writes:

His immaturity . . . was greater than is common for his years, and it may be mentioned here that a clue to much of his character and action throughout his life is afforded by his lateness of development in virility, while mentally precocious. He himself said humorously in later times that he was a child till he was sixteen, a youth till he was five-and-twenty, and a young man till he was nearly fifty. Whether this was intrinsic, or owed anything to his having lived in a remote spot in early life, is an open question.

It is not surprising that the first important rival for Hardy's deepest affection was another mature and forceful woman: Julia August Martin, the local squire's wife. Not only did she teach Hardy, but she set up a school especially for him. Hardy observes: "In fact, though he was only nine or ten at the time and she must have been nearly forty, his feeling for her must have been almost that of a lover." Before leaving the parish and school, Hardy made an "adventurous" foray into a party at the manor. In spite of his "lover-like promises of fidelity" on that occasion, he did not see her again for at least ten years, and then but briefly. For, although her circumstances, which had altered for the worse, presented him with an opportunity to repay past favors, the shocking evidence of her old age made him uncomfortable.

To confess his loverlike passion for a woman old enough to be his mother did not, however, cause Hardy so much embarrassment that he suppressed all references to the situation. Did he have a similar feeling toward his mother which could, under no circumstances, be acknowledged? And did his mother encourage his response? Quite possibly. For instance, Hardy commemorates his "first experience of travel . . . when, at eight or nine years old, his mother took him with her—'for protection,' as she used to say—being then an attractive and still young woman—on a visit to her sister in Hertfordshire." On the way back, they stopped at a coaching inn where Mary Godwin and Shelley had held trysts. Hardy relished the "possibility that he and his mother occupied the same room as our most marvelous lyricist." Altogether, despite reticence and evasion, there appears to be an aura of complicity and romance in the adventures of mother and son. One wonders about this entry in the *Notebooks*:

May 7th. My mother remarked today (concerning an incident she had witnessed in which a man and a woman were the characters—strangers to her): "They were mother and son, I suppose, or perhaps man and wife, for they marry in such queer ways nowadays that there's no telling which. Anyhow, there was a partnership of some kind between them."

Whatever kind of "partnership" existed between Hardy and his mother, he had many reasons to be equally close to his father and uncle. All three relished the performance of country jigs and church music. His grandfather, who smuggled liquor on the side, pioneered in the development of music in Stinsford Church. According to Hardy, the description of Clym's uncle's virtuosity is "a humorous exaggeration of the tradition concerning Thomas Hardy the First's musical triumphs as *locum-tenens*." By neglecting his building trade and by providing food and liquor for the choir that practised at his house, Thomas the Second earned his wife's disapproval. Thomas the Third, although he satisfied his mother's ambition by becoming an "architect" rather than a "builder"—or a preacher—retained a lively interest in church music—as well as architecture—and built a monument to the three Hardy musicians who preceded him.

Another common chord was the Hardy men's love of the outdoors. "Altogether an open-air liver," Hardy's father was so close and submissive to nature that he would lie on a thyme-covered bank and let the insects play about him. Just such were the feelings of Clym Yeobright and of Thomas Hardy—even in his declining years.

Being so closely attuned to both of his parents, Hardy must have been very sensitive to their discordant ideas about society. Although of better birth than his wife, Thomas the Second loved rough country ways. These included the folk dances he taught to his children—until his wife demanded “more genteel” and modish forms of recreation. She confessed to her son that Thomas the Second had appeared “rather amusingly old-fashioned” to her “first troubled glance” and “somewhat satiric vision.” That same vision saw that the Hardy family had long been “deteriorating.” All the more reason why her son must go up in the world! In her son’s novel, the social differences between his and Clym Yeobright’s parents have been reversed. What more natural than to make the ambitious Mrs. Yeobright of higher estate than her nature-loving, unambitious husband? And if the mother’s driving influence was stronger than the father’s passivity, why not represent Clym’s father as having died in some vague fashion at an undetermined time? In fact, Clym’s father, who receives a left-handed compliment from Eustacia’s father, is bypassed by the garrulous heath folk and is mentioned only in passing by his mother when she regrets not having re-married in order to get more children. If, indeed, this character corresponds in many ways to Hardy’s father, then building a monument to him was hardly enough reparation!

Since so little mention is made of Clym’s father, we must look to the description of his brother for added clues about family characteristics. Fairway describes Clym’s uncle, the versatile musician. He was “as good a feller as ever lived. He always had his great indignation ready against anything underhand.” Cryptic references suggest that Mrs. Yeobright was much younger than her husband. The essential difference between husband and wife is implied in a dialogue between Eustacia and her grandfather. Eustacia has just asked why her family is not on better terms with Clym’s:

“Be hanged if I know why,” said the captain. “I liked the old man well enough, though he was as rough as a hedge. But you would never have cared to go there, even if you might have, I am well sure.”

“Why shouldn’t I?”

“Your town tastes would find them far too countrified. They sit in the kitchen, drink mead and elderwine, and sand the floor to keep it clean. A sensible way of life; but how would you like it?”

"I thought Mrs. Yeobright was a ladylike woman? A curate's daughter, was she not?"

"Yes, but she was obliged to live as her husband did; and I suppose she has taken kindly to it by this time. . . ."

While there is much irony in the captain's last words, there is no hint in the novel that Mrs. Yeobright revered her husband's memory or kept it alive in her son. In fact, the male relatives who might have helped Clym to achieve a genuine camaraderie with the heath folk remain shadowy figures of the past. The only two demonstrable influences on Clym are the heath and his mother. The heath, which may be likened to Jung's archetypal mother, is indeed all-enveloping and protective to the lad. His respect for its somber values is based partially on knowledge of its antiquity. Is there a touch of the archetypal fear? Toward his mother he has developed an overt wariness. Having "come down in the world" to marry his father, she is doting, domineering, ambitious for her son, and—unlike the Yeobright brothers—capable of doing "underhand" things. She is also the Victorian "good" woman, a curate's daughter, whose duty to enforce respectability gives her unlimited power. She is capable of using the reddleman as a pawn, disposing of Thomasin's affairs summarily, and dismissing any one else from the least claim to consideration whenever her son's interests (or her plans for his future) are at stake.

When Clym asks why he has not been informed of Thomasin's "disgrace," she replies:

" . . . and when I found that you were nothing in her mind I vowed she should be nothing in yours. I felt she was *only my niece after all*; I told her she might marry, but that I should take no interest in it, and should not bother you about it either."

"It wouldn't have been bothering me. Mother, you did wrong."

"I thought it might disturb you in your business, and that you might throw up your situation, or injure your prospects in some way because of it, so I said nothing. Of course, if they had married at that time in the proper manner, I should have told you at once."

The italics are mine. In that phrase Mrs. Yeobright is expressing not only undivided loyalty to her son but disparagement of Thomasin, who is related only to Clym's father—the inferior side of the family. And what was Thomasin's crime? Failure to make a "proper" elope-

ment, or failure to wait patiently and be available in case Clym should ever make up his mind to desire her? Clym is horrified to realize that at that moment Thomasin is making a "proper" marriage which will make her miserable. Clym had "once thought of Thomasin as a sweetheart" and "half-wishes" that Wildeva will fail to appear. "And ruin her character?" Mrs. Yeobright asks. Clym responds, "Nonsense—that wouldn't ruin Thomasin."

Why does Clym attack his mother's bigotry? Conjecturally, he might have absorbed something from contact with his rough and regular father and uncle. His father, who was "rough as a hedge," must have felt easy and natural among all forms of animal and vegetable life. In Paris, where he had been sent to satisfy his mother's ambition, Clym studied liberal politics and pessimistic philosophy. And the heath itself was like a silent partner to his egalitarian ideals. To say that the heath has always been a rival to his mother is too extreme, but the two are not entirely compatible. Although she conducts herself with dignity on the face of the heath, Mrs. Yeobright's real feelings are expressed by the white picket fence, a mockworthy effort to maintain some degree of isolation from the heath and its myriad forms of life. When he is fully attuned to it, the heath represents to Clym warm receptiveness, naturalness, and equality. When he is even partially alert to his mother's attitude, he finds in her cool cunning, Victorian primness, and ambition.

After Thomasin is disposed of, Mrs. Yeobright faces the dual threat of Eustacia and her son's humanitarian goals. She "half-wishes" that she had allowed Thomasin to—but she will not arrive at even that saving conclusion. Although intelligent, Mrs. Yeobright is not inclined to be self-critical. She lives for her son only; what is wrong with that attitude in a mother? Her self-sacrifice should have bound Clym to her in unreasoning submission, but Clym has learned that—even in so important a matter as the choice of his career—he has a telepathic "magnetism" which gives him the victory:

His theory and his wishes about devoting his future to teaching had made an impression on Mrs. Yeobright. Indeed, how could it be otherwise when he was a part of her—when their discourses were as if carried on between the right and the left hands of the same body? He had despaired of reaching her by argument; and it was *almost* a discovery to him that he could reach her by a magnetism which was as superior to words as words are to yells.

Strangely enough, he began to feel now that it would not be so hard to persuade her who was his best friend that comparative poverty was essentially the higher course for him, *as to reconcile to his feelings the act of persuading her*. From every provident point of view his mother was so undoubtedly right, that he was *not without a sickness of heart* in finding he could shake her.

The italics are mine. The vague *almost* suggests that Clym had half-known the power he possesses over his mother. His reluctance to assume that power consciously I can only compare with the scene in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* when the precocious child realizes that his parents realize the danger of his power to dictate to his mother. Clym's is a pyrrhic victory in more than one sense, and the vaguely expressed "sickness of heart" may well be a recognition of what is wrong in the mother-and-son relationship.

"Mother, what is doing well?" Clym asks wearily. This question must have disturbed Clym since childhood, for the heath folk have always expected him to make an all-or-nothing stab at success. Their ironically expressed "great expectations" that he will either "go to the dogs" or soar to the top hardly seem appropriate to Clym or his father and uncle—or to the heath folk themselves. They are, however, appropriate to his mother. Why, one wonders, does Clym reject the diamond business as being "effeminate"? Because women, as well as men, wear diamonds, or because it is associated with his mother's ambition for him—and so with her over-protectiveness, which robs him of masculinity?

Typical of Mrs. Yeobright's all-or-nothing response to life is the reaction to her failure to dictate his choice of wife and career. After recalling how "tender and kind" her "good" little boy had been, she now rejects him completely. To Thomasin, who can be counted on to contradict her, she confesses that she is "wrongly made": "Some widows can guard against the wounds their children give them by turning their hearts to another husband and beginning life again. But I was always a poor, weak, one-idea'd creature. . . ." She expresses regret that, as a "comparatively young" widow, she did not remarry, have another family, and be "comforted by them for the failure of this one son." Mrs. Yeobright may be feeling genuine regret that she has put all her emotional eggs into one basket, but the rest of her speech is subject to doubt. She either shows no inclination or has not the wherewithal to leave the heath and does not mingle freely with its

inhabitants. Whom would she have married? And why, except to pose the threat of brothers and sisters as rivals to Clym for her affection?

Clym's attraction to Eustacia revives the old argument as to what constitutes a "good woman." The conflict is now deadly and bitter. Ostensibly, they are arguing about "good" in the Victorian sense. Actually, Clym's mother is prepared to challenge the fitness of any woman to usurp her place, while Clym is blindly seeking a physically attractive woman who is "nice" enough—and strong enough—to rescue him. He protests too much that he is not attracted to Eustacia's beauty, but finds that her allure has most providentially enhanced his scheme to sacrifice himself to society. In fact, she may even modify his plan, as his mother had been able to do, since, having found a genuine rival to his mother, he is not so strongly impelled toward moral masochism. With his mother, however, there is no compromise. Eustacia, the heath-folk jury has agreed, is Clym's equal in breeding, intelligence, and education. But what "one-idea'd" mother could accept this verdict?

As to Eustacia's dedication to the cause of humanity, Clym shows a talent for rationalization which will later allow him to sanctify his mother. He asserts that the stormy "Queen of the Night" "would make a good matron in a boarding school." Getting down to Victorian brass tacks, his mother counters that "good" girls don't "get treated as witches, even on Egdon Heath." These words, although verbally rejected at the time, remain as echoes to reenforce his ready recrimination at the first unproven hint of his wife's infidelity.

Eustacia proves a game adversary, well equipped to "vie" with Clym's mother and effect a rescue. But to what avail? Inexperienced Eustacia cannot foresee how Clym might punish himself for desertion of his mother. In order to serve the people who do not want to be served—and against the express wishes of the two women closest to his heart—he misuses his eyes. Unlike Oedipus, he does not achieve a sudden, obviously self-inflicted blindness but, as Hardy describes it, a rather abrupt half-blindness. Eustacia's growing impatience with her husband's illness and lack of ambition are in a sense justified, for the two are closely related and will lead to far greater self-torture, to be shared with her. Her impatience, in turn, leads to minor indiscretions and finally to Mrs. Yeobright's being turned away from her son's home to perish in the heath. Eustacia is to be blamed for this demise. Yet it was her husband's muttering "Mother" in his sleep which misled Eustacia into thinking him awake. To many this speech has seemed

improbable. Not so, however, to followers of Rank, since half-blind Clym, after many hours of nestling close to Mother Earth, has just entered the womblike security of sleep. Double irony, then, if that word sends the cold mother, who had withdrawn her solicitude, into the inferno of the heath. The viper which stings her suggests treachery. Is it also a phallic symbol? In any case, it is the unfailingly maternal heath which disposes of Clym's mother.

After her death, neither Eustacia nor the heath can save Clym from a life-in-death existence. He longs for death "as a field-laborer longs for the shadow." Wearily, Eustacia reminds him that "other men's mothers have died." But this particular mother seems to have left him a legacy of her all-or-nothing attitudes. He is now convinced that, as his mother was beyond compare, so must his grief be inconsolable. Thomasin, who can remember her aunt as she really was, tries unavailingly to "reason" with him. Like Oedipus, he must fight aggressively to compound his suffering by discovering a half-truth which will lead to agony and the death of his other loved one.

What better instrument of "fate" than Susan? Clym senses that his marriage to a "witch" has earned Susan's hostility, but he remembers that "she bore his mother no ill will" and so persists in the questioning of her son. As he drives nearer to the supposed "Truth," he fails to recognize in Susan the same ruthless methods to protect her son which his mother had employed in his behalf. In describing Susan's peculiar expression, Hardy says, "To anybody but a half-blind man, it would have said, 'You want another of those knocks which have already laid you low.'" Is there a better way to describe the cunning of a moral masochist? The telling blow strikes like a storm on the heath. "How was her face?" Clym asks. "Like yours is now," Johnnie answers. Clym's face is described:

The pupils of his eyes, fixed steadily on blankness, were vaguely lit with an icy shine; his mouth had passed into the phase more or less imaginatively rendered in studies of Oedipus. The strangest deeds were possible to his mood. But they were not possible to his situation. Instead of there being before him the pale face of Eustacia, and a masculine shape unknown, there was only the imperturbable countenance of the heath, which, having defied the cataclysmal onsets of centuries, reduced to insignificance by its seamed and antique features the wildest turmoil of a single man.

This passage is a curious mixture of vagueness and absolutes. At the moment Clym and his dead mother are reunited in a common

expression; it is the mask of tragedy which Oedipus wore after his incestuous love of Jocasta was terminated. But the searing guilt has been conveniently displaced. Eustacia, the "murderess" of his mother, is now to be thought of as a prostitute. But his masklike grimace before unsympathetic witnesses absolves him from the maculine necessity to make a reckoning with his rival. Eustacia and her vague lover are blotted from the picture of the mind's eye. And in Eustacia's place? Mother Earth, void of conflict between fresh and faded attractiveness. It alone can "quiet the turmoil" of a "single man."

The next passage suggests nostalgia for the temporary solution of the oedipal conflict—satisfying, but never quite final:

A consciousness of vast impassivity in all which lay around him took possession even of Yeobright in his wild walk towards Alderworth. He had once before felt in his own person the overpowering of the fervid by the inanimate; but then it had tended to enervate a passion far sweeter than that which at present pervaded him. It was once when he stood parting from Eustacia in the moist still levels beyond the hill.

The "vast impassivity" which "took possession" of Yeobright suggests captivating femininity, but in an antique mold, traditionally opposed to the youthful "usurper." Do the "moist still levels" suggest the reason for his attraction to Eustacia? With suspect vagueness, Yeobright dismisses "all this" and rushes into a violent quarrel with Eustacia, during which his real motives are most effectively disguised to himself.

He will, he says, allow himself no jealousy, for all of his feelings are to be centered on his mother. Is this not convenient? Juxtaposition of mother and wife as saint and prostitute allows him to "suppress" a desire to kill Eustacia or act otherwise as society might expect him to do: "That would be making a martyr of you, and sending you to where she is; and I would keep you away from her till the universe comes to an end, if I could. . . ." Why does a man whose subsequent preaching is hardly Calvinistic insist on extending the outer limits of heaven and hell to accommodate these two woman? Is it because Eustacia's unintentional wrong could be explained briefly to any reasonable man—much less a prodigy like Clym? His own crime of desertion was premeditated and caused him little conscious pain as long as Eustacia lavished all her love on him. Later, his "worrying despair" at his mother's death was too forced to give him any real satisfaction. Now he can hurt himself doubly by making Eustacia suffer. With

some justification Eustacia cries, "O you are too relentless—there's a limit to the cruelty of savages!"

Yet the old attraction to Eustacia lingers. In a passage containing such Freudian symbols as "holes in the ground" and "crannies" to suggest female sex organs, he rationalizes his desire to feel "solicitude" (desire) for his mother's "supplanter":

... and at dusk, when soft, strange ventriloquisms came from holes in the ground, hollow stalks, curled dead leaves, and other crannies, wherein breezes, worms, and insects can work their will, he fancied that they were Eustacia, standing without and breathing wishes of reconciliation.

Up to this hour he had persevered in his resolve not to have her back. At the same time the severity with which he had treated her lulled the sharpness of his regret for his mother, and awoke some of his old solicitude for his mother's supplanter.

How much is accomplished in one brief rationalization. Eustacia's fresh charms are somehow united with the venerable, worm-eaten lure of the heath, in a way I can only compare with the paintings of Salvador Dali or other surrealists. And the very falseness of his rant against Eustacia is now an excuse for welcoming her back. But he would like to wait or to condone his failure to fight off a rival—perhaps to prolong his suffering—until Eustacia "breathes" her "wishes of reconciliation." This attitude is pricked by Thomasin, whose normal grief for her aunt has run its course. She asks, "Were you too cruel?" Clym makes the response which a man in his supposed condition is expected to make: "Can a man be too cruel to his mother's enemy?" A mild response from Thomasin spurs Clym to plans for reunion with Eustacia.

At this point in the story, Fate as a Mother-Substitute and/or the blind will of the pessimistic philosophers and/or Hardy's skill in plot-making takes over. To what purpose? Eustacia, the unpredictable siren whom every man hopes for and fears as a part of his life, and Wildeve, whom "no man would like and no woman could hate," are obliterated by shuddering nature. What better solution for a "hero" with an instinctive love for "Mother Earth" and no stomach for tracking down a rival? Of course, the solution must not bring him happiness. After a feeble effort to fend off Thomasin's marriage to Diggory Venn, Clym is ridiculously self-effacing. With a resigned echo of his old Oedipus-like manner of asking the wrong questions, he questions Charlie about the wedding crowd:

"Do any of them seem to care about my not being there?" Clym asked.

"No, not a bit in the world. Now they are all holding up their glasses and drinking somebody's health."

"I wonder if it's mine?"

The reader can surmise Charlie's answer. Clym concludes that all is "as it should be."

All that remains is a self-consciously sad smile, his mother's "presence" in her empty chair, and a tender after-view of his near-solution of the oedipal conflict. For his mother—despite others' conception of her—is now "the sublimest saint whose radiance even his tendencies for Eustacia could not obscure." In the text of his first sermon, the oedipal situation is graphically portrayed: "And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne; and she sat on his right hand. Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay." The crowning irony is the condescending sympathy of his listeners, who are affected, not by his message, but by the story of his life, which had become "generally known." With or without variations, the Oedipus story has always made good listening—and good reading.

Hardy critics have laid much stress on his belief in *Hap*. In this particular story, *Half* seems more important. Clym's tragedy is that he is half-blind, half-aware of his own motives, and only half-understood by his peers and his creator. Philosophically speaking, Clym should, by embracing the all-is-one principle, have attained full spiritual vision, which would, *ipso facto*, be incomprehensible to the vulgarians of the heath. Yet, as Hardy describes their poor response to Clym's message, it is due partly to Clym's failure to ally himself with "creeds" or "systems of philosophy." Hardy, who made false assertions about his acquaintance with a particular system, might make such a statement, and he might use rational arguments to discredit that system. But would the heath folk have known what he was talking about? Psychologically speaking, Clym is a sick man who projects into his environment a solace for the halfway solution of an oedipal conflict. Although his actions (according to some critics) are those of an automaton, he has worked as energetically as any man can to bring punishment down on his head. He may appear less grandiose than the mythological figure to whom he is likened. But to the heath-folk jury and to the sympathetic reader, he is, indeed, "an interesting person."

## Book Reviews

*Studies in the History of Music*, ed. Egon Wellesz. London: Routledge, Kegan Paul; New York: Dover.

Vol. I (1958): *Music in Mediaeval Britain* by Frank Ll. Harrison. Pp. xix + 491. \$10.00.

Vol. II (1959): *The Fugue in Beethoven's Piano Music* by John V. Cockshoot. Pp. xv + 212. \$6.00.

Vol. III (1960): *William Lawes* by Murray Lefkowitz. Pp. x + 320. \$10.00.

The publication of extended scholarly works in the history of music is a relatively recent occurrence. Burney and Hawkins were breaking new ground when they published their histories in the eighteenth century: their achievements in chronicling the growth of an art from the time of the ancient Greeks to their own day were truly astounding, as was the number of primary sources consulted by them for the first time. Whatever biases there may have been, whether Handelian or antiquarian, neither the fascination of the past nor partisanship for the present hindered the completion of their appointed tasks. The significant rise of historicism at the end of the eighteenth century brought with it a change in attitude, however. Just as Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry . . . to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century* (1774-1781) never progressed beyond the Elizabethan period, so the great music historians of the nineteenth century were held so spell-bound by the Renaissance that they never reached the Baroque. This re-discovery of the past and the ardent love it engendered must compensate for the incompleteness of the music histories of the Belgian F. J. Fétis (1869-76) and the Austrian A. W. Ambros (1862-78). For here was criticism and re-evaluation of the most exciting kind. What had appeared to Burney as the crudities of an insufficiently mature art expressed to Ambros the glories of Renaissance style. Furthermore, Ambros was able to classify this style with fine acumen into the successive stages of the so-called four Netherlandish schools (since then labelled Franco-Flemish or Burgundian).

The growing sense of historicism resulted in establishing a new kind of scholarship which produced both comprehensive histories and monographs on individual topics. The need for large-scale histories, both for reference and for study became (and still is) so pressing that, with increasing specialization, another *magnum opus* makes its appearance every generation or so. It is significant that the *New Oxford History of Music*, now in process of publication, is being administered by a team of editors who assign the individual chapters in their respective volumes to qualified contributors. But works of such extensive application are aptly complemented by the scholarly monograph which, in the history of music, is barely a century old. It was the classicist Otto Jahn who conceived the plan of writing a monograph on Mozart that was neither a biography nor a mere essay but one that would do full justice to biographical sources as well

as stylistic influences. In spite of the exhaustive treatment given their respective subjects, the historians Spitta and Jahn are neither pedantic nor impersonal. When Spitta discusses the character of a vocal treble melody in a Bach cantata (sung by a boy's not a woman's voice) and when Jahn pays tribute to the Apollonian beauty of Mozart's music, one may not always agree with their inferences, but there is no denying that these mature scholars speak out of a profound conviction.

One of the best known series in musical studies in the German-speaking countries was established under Guido Adler of the University of Vienna in 1913 and entitled *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*. The first volume contained Egon Wellesz' brilliant monographs on Cavalli and the style of Venetian opera. Now, almost half a century later, Wellesz himself has inaugurated a similar series in the English language, entitled *Studies in the History of Music*. The first three volumes, here under review, are connected with the University of Oxford where Wellesz was Reader in Music until his recent retirement. Frank Ll. Harrison's *Music in Mediaeval Britain* is, as one might expect, the most well-considered and distinguished volume of the series so far. It fills a crying need in our library shelves, for English music before Tallis and Byrd has been scarcely explored at all, with the possible exception of Dunstable. The author has made a thorough search among the primary sources still extant and has come up with what is by far the most complete and up-to-date presentation. The book is perhaps misnamed in that it is actually a study of religious music (secular music is not taken into account), the development of which the author traces beyond the Middle Ages up to 1550. However, considering that the liturgy of the Church of England remained Latin up to the time of Henry VIII and Wolsey, and most extant sources are sacred, not secular, there are reasons of pedagogy as well as expediency for Dr. Harrison's procedure. Since the volume is primarily concerned with presenting unknown music and unknown musical procedures, there is little space allowed for critical evaluation. Still, the author deftly inserts a sentence here and a qualifying epithet there which reveal sound judgment and are welcome guides to the various degrees of excellency of the music surveyed.

The strength of this book lies in its firm grasp of the liturgy and the various sacred institutions for which the music was composed. This knowledge is indispensable for a discussion of the style or criticism of individual works within a style. Mediaeval and Renaissance polyphony originated in the ornamentations of the solo sections of Gregorian chant which, in many cases, alternated with the singing of the choir in unison. These solo sections inspired ambitious composers to make polyphonic settings, although their soloistic character was preserved in that polyphony was rendered by a duo, trio or quartet of solo voices. The remaining portions of the chant were performed "plainly" as before, that is to say, in one line melody, and "massively," that is, by the entire choir. In order to assess these matters and to understand properly the place of polyphony in the liturgy a knowledge of the organization of the mediaeval cathedral is essential, particularly the great secular cathedrals of Notre Dame and Salisbury. The distinction between the secular cathedrals, which employed boys as well as men, and the monastic cathedrals and abbeys, which employed only monks, is important. So also is the distinction between strictly institutional music and music performed at those services which took place outside the monastic choir, either in the nave or the Lady-chapel. There are many architectural drawings in Dr.

Harrison's volume and the Lady-chapel emerges as a "locus" of great liturgical and musical importance. When the late Friedrich Ludwig (of Göttingen) discovered the great polyphonic compositions for solo voices of Perotinus Magnus, called *organa* or *clausulae*, he took them to be substitute compositions for the work of earlier composers. This "replacement" theory leaves much to be desired, and Dr. Harrison (p. 123 ff.) suggests instead that the great polyphonic *clausulae* and motets were performed in the celebration of the mass, during the ritual which followed the *Sanctus*. This hypothesis seems plausible since it sees the *clausulae* as self-sufficient compositions, extra-ritual items performed by license on especially festive occasions.

After 1400 a new kind of polyphony came into being in England (as well as in France). It was sung by the choir rather than the solo voices. This new mode of performance is evident both from the physical size of the extant manuscripts and from the characteristics of the musical style itself. The wheel came full circle in the work of Taverner (master of the choristers at Christ Church, Oxford). In a plain chant respond, the composer set the choral part of the plain chant in polyphony and left the soloists' part of the chant to be sung in plainsong. The effect was to restore the kind of contrast between choir and soloists which was originally contemplated in plainchant. This contrast had been reversed during the Gothic period in deference to the greater competence of the soloists to perform the novel and more demanding kind of music. But by the time of Henry VIII and Wolsey, the choirs of secular foundations such as Christ Church had absorbed the new art of polyphony sufficiently to become skilled performers in the polyphonic medium. Thus the craft of composition and its growth are seen in the perspective of liturgical and institutional developments.

Mr. Lefkowitz's book *William Lawes* is concerned with a minor composer of the seventeenth century. In the past, William Lawes, born 1602, has tended to be overshadowed by his older brother, Henry, but an examination of all scores extant in print or manuscript should make us reconsider this judgment. As a composer of secular songs, church music and instrumental pieces, William Lawes is both the more gifted and the more comprehensive musician; in fact, he emerges as a major English composer of the Caroline period and one who forms a not negligible link between Dowland and Campion on the one hand and Purcell on the other. Both as performer of dramatic music to the King's Men playing at the Blackfriars and as composer of expressive airs not connected with playhouses or masques, Lawes fashioned a peculiarly expressive kind of melody. His setting of Robert Herrick's poem, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," was reprinted about thirty times in the course of the seventeenth century, which is no mean test of popularity. Equally distinguished are his fantasias for instrumental consort which show a secure grasp of a truly instrumental idiom rather than the customary perpetuation of vocal counterpoint. To invent and shape, in the spirit of the instrument for which he was writing, was a characteristic which his brother eulogized after William's premature death in 1645: "Neither was there any instrument then in use, but he composed to it so aptly, as if he had only studied that."

William Lawes has never before been investigated in so much detail and with so generous an amount of music examples. Mr. Lefkowitz's book is likely to remain the standard work on the subject for many years to come. It is marred

slightly by excessive enthusiasm for its subject and occasionally one is aware that the author knows his Lawes very well indeed but is less familiar with contemporaneous musical developments. Still, this is a useful book and one in which the author is not afraid to attack the current critical evaluation of William Lawes. His re-assessment of Lawes's stature in the stream of English music is thoroughly justified.

*The Fugue in Beethoven's Piano Music* is an odd title. To this reviewer it seems dubious wisdom that a study of Beethoven's fugal technique should not properly embrace all of Beethoven's music. Does it make sense to devote a separate paragraph to the Piano Sonata in G Major, Opus 14 No. 2, First Movement, bars 70-72, but not to discuss the fugal passages in the third and ninth symphonies, let alone the first movement of the String Quartet in C Sharp Minor, Opus 131? The author discusses in great detail the piano fugue from Opus 35 but fails to give similar treatment to the fugal handling of the same theme in the Eroica Symphony. This omission is particularly strange, since the author's first chapter is not restricted to piano music but discusses the teaching of fugal technique in general from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries and shows a good grasp of the importance of J. J. Fux' *Gradus ad Parnassum*, Vienna, 1725. The gradual transmutation of the graceful and light music current in Vienna in the eighteenth century through the impact of the severe contrapuntal style of Johan Sebastian Bach makes a fascinating story. It was in the house of van Swieten in Vienna (formerly ambassador of the Hapsburg Court in Berlin) that Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven came to know both the splendour and the splendid potentialities of the Baroque fugue. If anything, Mr. Cockshoot underestimates the importance of van Swieten, who is mentioned only once in his discourse. On the other hand, the treatment of fugues and fugal passages in the piano works proper is both exhaustive and commendable. The analysis of the fugue from Opus 35 is facilitated by printing the entire fugue in full score, that is to say, with one staff for each of the three voices, and throughout a generous amount of musical examples, clearly printed, facilitates comprehension of the author's argument.

FREDERICK W. STERNFELD

Oxford University

*The Dilemma of Being Modern: Essays on Art and Literature* by J. P. Hodin.

New York: The Noonday Press, 1959. Pp. 271. \$5.00.

Mr. J. P. Hodin, the editor of *Quadrum: International Magazine of Modern Art*, of London, has gathered here essays which he published between 1940 and 1953 in several countries where he is at home with the language, life and art. If he never was with Kafka he "spent many hours" with Dora Dymant who was. He talked at length with Edvard Munch, James Ensor, Marc Chagall, Henry Moore, Bernard Leach. If other artists presented here were not interviewed in person, it is almost as if they were, and there are photographs of some of them.

Mr. Hodin is informed and intimate, conveying an exciting sense of seeing what is wrong with our time, and a tantalizing air of being on the verge of telling what to think about it, if not what to do. He is beyond art for art's sake.

Great artists are saints and martyrs out to save the world. He is distressed by widespread "disheartenment and nihilism." He feels that "mechanized civilization has robbed us of our innermost strength and enslaves us more and more" (p. 37).

We may agree that this is largely and dangerously true; also that hope is in turning from "greed and fear, egoism and destructive urges" to a more healthy, social and constructive outlook (p. 156). The author seems well on the way to such a view when he praises Herbert Read for carrying on the line of Ruskin and William Morris on the interrelation of art and morality, and the importance of art as the expression of everyday life. This is close to John Dewey's view of art as the clarification and completion of normal experience (in *Art As Experience*). But, along with espousing a sensible, social, and even scientific approach to art, in sections on Freud and Read, Hodin goes back on this line of sense and sanity. His hold on this direction might have been firmer if his familiarity with art, life and criticism were not practically limited to England and Europe which he takes to be not only the world but the "Modern World." He is listed as one of the foreign editors of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, but is apparently without benefit of the work of its editor, Thomas Munro, especially his *Toward Science in Aesthetics*; or of the work of Dewey. These men might have enabled Hodin to keep his hold on the humanistic, scientific and social line he seemed to be establishing from Ruskin and William Morris through Freud to Read.

Instead Hodin slips into mystification and obfuscation, urging a turn from the sciences of man and nature to "the vital force in each of us" (p. 160), to Goethe's "higher knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) and intuitive understanding (*Einsicht*)" (p. 167), and even to Dr. Alexis Carrel's *Man the Unknown*. Kafka, Sartre, and Rilke are downgraded for their "disharmonious, melancholic, tragic, schizophrenic or paranoiac" view (p. 172); but with no recognition of their ability to relieve the nightmare forced upon them by their sensitivity to the dislocations of modern life; no notice of their wonderful appreciation of what still can be enjoyed and built upon in the simple everyday things and basic relationships. Instead of seeing what can be cherished and trusted in their naturalism and humanism, Hodin abandons everything naturalistic and humanistic, social or scientific, to end up praising Malraux's excitement over all that he and Goya "found equivocal, absurd, and at the same time terrifyingly fascinating in life . . . the *mysterium tremendum* before which men fear and tremble . . ." (p. 251). Finally we are urged to admire "the attempt to rediscover the world of the irrational or superhuman . . ." (p. 255).

VAN METER AMES

University of Cincinnati

*Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory* by Edwin Honig. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1959. Pp. xii + 210. \$4.50.

This book on allegory suggests that the "prejudices" against it among modern writers and critics are not well founded. To Professor Honig modern opinion seems to take a narrow view and to judge allegory mainly by "debased examples." His purpose is to rehabilitate the form as an "indispensable instrument of thought

and belief . . . a fundamental way of thinking about man and the universe" (p. 7), and above all as a form of literature. Far from being a simple inflexible literary form allegory appears to Mr. Honig capable of great variety and complexity. In suggesting that we take a "broader view" of the subject, he would have us not limit allegory to works based upon simple didactic personification, or to works in which the allegory is continuous. His authors include not only Dante, Spenser, and Bunyan, but, more especially, Swift, Melville, Hawthorne, and Kafka. Poe, James, Lawrence, and Joyce also appear at times as exhibiting an "essentially symbolic or allegorical approach" (p. 52). His writers, united by a "common ground of symbolic intent," make allegory seem to become almost synonymous with "symbolic fiction." But Mr. Honig believes that symbolism as a literary term has become so diffuse in meaning (including "nothing less than all verbal utterance") that "the term allegory fits the fictional procedure more accurately" (p. 5).

Mr. Honig finds in Coleridge "a principal source of the modern opposition to the concept of allegory" (p. 44), since Coleridge associated allegory with the mechanical, the self-conscious, and the fanciful, in contrast to the organic and the imaginative. In discussing Coleridge's concept of the imagination Mr. Honig suggests very interestingly that it "reformulates the medieval belief [in the formal and functional truth of objective reality]," but does so "with a different emphasis, giving, as it were, a centripetal instead of a centrifugal direction" (p. 49). But to Mr. Honig Coleridge seems to identify the aim of art with the artist's "expression of personality rather than with the mimetic principle of art as an imitation of nature and life" (p. 47), and this leads in the end, he suggests, to "art for art's sake." Mr. Honig rejects Coleridge's criticism of allegory. In fact a recurrent burden in the argument of the book is that meaning in allegory is not necessarily preconceived and mechanically illustrated, but often is rich and complex, growing and developing directly out of the concrete embodiment of the work. The quotations from Coleridge may have the undue advantage of appealing to our modern "prejudices," but it is difficult to deny their cogency, even after reading Mr. Honig's criticism which places them in the context of the Romantic tradition.

But the modern dissatisfaction with the concept of allegory reflects ultimately, Mr. Honig suggests, a dissatisfaction with the idea that art should express beliefs and purposes, not merely the individual experience of the artist. Modern "ideals" offer the same high possibilities of literary embodiment as did the medieval Christian ideals for integrating individual and cultural consciousness (pp. 181-182). The ambivalence in the modern attitude toward the irrational-fascinated as well as repelled, but not glorifying it like the Romantics—seems to Mr. Honig "typically suited to the method and purpose of allegory. . . . From the beginning, allegory has offered the rational consciousness a way of regulating imaginative materials that otherwise appear confounded by contradictions and bristling with destructive implications" (p. 53).

Allegory seems to Mr. Honig, therefore, to serve "more comprehensively than the other tropes [metaphor, irony, symbol] in structuring the design of fiction." The advantage is not limited to its schematic structure. Allegory is, Mr. Honig believes, the "literary type that engages, more fully than any other, the symbolic uses of literature." See in his wider perspective the "practices of allegory" may be observed in the workings of epic, satire, pastoral (p. 54).

When Mr. Honig goes on to examine several "typical constructs of allegorical narration," the reader is impressed by the subtleties and complexities of the meanings he unfolds, but one is uncertain what these analyses prove about the allegorical method. It is not always clear that he is, in fact, discussing allegory, and not something else brought in by his "broader view" of the subject. A standard by which Mr. Honig often measures the success of an allegorical work seems not unlike Coleridge's standard, applicable to any literary work, of its organic unity and wholeness. "Fiction and allegory must be simultaneous, a single creation. Both together must assert an integrated vision of reality; and this creative authority must be sustained within the work, not by an appeal to any body of doctrine outside of it" (p. 93). The allegorist's "reality comes into existence and comes to mean something at the same time. . . . The meanings grow naturally out of each action in the narrative. . . . The more complex a writer's grasp of psycho-physical relationships, the richer the work is likely to be" (p. 114). The reader may wonder if the author is speaking of allegory as such, or of the relation of image and idea in any successful literary work.

This book makes great demands on the reader who would follow its thought. Its prose is often more obscure and less inviting than the poetic epigraphs which precede most of the chapters. In the closing paragraph, as at the beginning of several chapters, Mr. Honig invokes the aid of Wallace Stevens. The idea of allegory may be, he says, quoting Stevens, "'a name for something that could never be named' and actually should 'bear no name' other than 'inconceivable idea' existing 'in the difficulty of what is to be.'" One appreciates the reality and value of such feelings in certain contexts, but it is not a feeling with which one likes to conclude a work of criticism.

ALEXANDER SACKTON

*The University of Texas*

*Anna Livia Plurabelle: The Making of a Chapter*, ed. Fred H. Higginson. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1960. Pp. 111. \$3.75.

The *Anna Livia Plurabelle* section of *Finnegans Wake* (I. viii) is the most famous example of Joyce's ultimate artistic aims and achievements. Now a standard anthology piece, this lyrical evocation of Joyce's river-like heroine is familiar to many readers who know nothing of the *Wake* as a whole. When *Finnegans Wake* was still a nameless "Work in Progress" the early published texts of *Anna Livia* served as a touchstone to Joyce's mysterious creation, and since the publication of the *Wake* the episode has been the subject of more commentary than any other section. Joyce himself encouraged this emphasis on *Anna Livia*; he considered the episode's fluid language a triumph and vindication for all his radical experiments in musical form. "The stream is now rising to flood point," he boasted while recasting the episode, "but I find she can carry almost anything." Joyce's careful and elaborate revisions of *Anna Livia* testify to his fondness for the episode; one of the first sections of the *Wake* to be conceived, *Anna Livia* went through more than twenty distinct stages of revision between its inception in 1923 and the publication of the *Wake* in 1939. It appeared in more printed

versions than any other episode, and its complex history reflects in detail the development of Joyce's artistic methods.

Because the growth of *Anna Livia* reveals so much about the nature of Joyce's final work, all those interested in the tendencies of modern literature should welcome Fred H. Higginson's record of the episode's evolution. Using the early published versions and the voluminous *Finnegans Wake* MSS (now in the British Museum), Professor Higginson has enabled the reader to trace the history of *Anna Livia* through every stage of composition. He has reduced the complicated and often bewildering materials to six basic texts, ranging from the earliest draft (1923) to the 1930 Faber and Faber edition (which is very close to the final version). Thus the reader who has a general interest in Joyce's methods can grasp the episode's development by simply reading the six basic texts; for those who have a more detailed interest Professor Higginson has provided an ingenious system of brackets and textual notes which enables the scholar to reconstruct each stage in the growth of the episode. The entire book is a model of compact and sensible editorial work. Professor Higginson has simplified the process of composition so that it can be easily followed, yet at the same time he has retained a complete record of the episode's evolution. There is also a useful and unpretentious Introduction which discusses the episode's design and the character of Joyce's revision. The only objection one might make concerns Professor Higginson's description of the various manuscripts and typescripts used in the edition; this complicated Editorial Note might have been better presented in diagrammatic, rather than narrative, form.

The successive texts of *Anna Livia* assembled by Professor Higginson make fascinating reading, even for those who are unfamiliar with the *Wake* as a whole. In order to demonstrate the utility of this edition, and the kind of illumination it sheds on Joyce's art, one need only trace the history of a single passage. Early in the first complete draft of the episode (dating from the autumn of 1923) we find the following passage, in which the two washerwomen gossiping on the banks of the river Liffey speak of Anna Livia's "rhyme" (a version of the "letter" discussed in *Finnegans Wake* I. v. and partially revealed in the closing episode).

And what about the rhyme she made! O that! Tell me that! I'm dying down off my feet until I hear Anna Livia's rhyme. I can see that. I can see you are. How does it go? Listen now. This is the rhyme Anna Livia made

During the next few months Joyce labored over the text of *Anna Livia*, and by March of 1924 this brief passage had been enriched by a reference to the nineteenth-century Irish poet Denis Florence MacCarthy.

And what about the rhyme she made! O that! Tell me that while I'm lathering hell out of Denis Florence MacCarthy's combies. I'm dying down off my feet until I hear Anna Livia's rhyme! I can see that, I see you are. How does it go? Listen now. Are you listening? Yes, yes! Indeed I am! Listen now. Listen in:

This version establishes a basic "narrative" which was not substantially altered throughout the complex process of revision. Joyce's first step in writing the *Wake*'s episodes was to sketch in the "narrative" outlines—then, with a funda-

mental pattern before him, he began to "thicken" the text. The nature of this "thickening" process was usually dictated by the character of the episode's subject, for it was Joyce's aim to make the form of each episode "expressive" of its content. Thus in *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, where the heroine is associated with the river Liffey and all the world's rivers, Joyce sought to make his language as "river-like" as possible. This "expressive" intent can be discerned in our passage by mid-1925:

And what was the wyerye rhyme she made! O that! Tell me that while I'm lathering hell out of Denis Florence MacCarthy's combies. I'm dying down off my iodine feet until I hear Anna Livia's cushingloo! I can see that, I see you are. How does it go? Listen now. Are you listening? Yes, yes! Indeed I am! Listen now. Listen in:

Here the "rhyme" has become a "wyerye" one, combining "weary" with the names of two rivers, the Wye and the Rye. The "watery" nature of the passage is also strengthened by the insertion of "iodine." These changes reflect Joyce's obsessive desire to transform the language of *Anna Livia Plurabelle* into the language of all rivers. The chief method for accomplishing this intent was the insertion of river-names and allusions: there is not a single river-name in the first draft of the episode, while the final version contains well over six hundred. The accumulation of these river-names occurred mainly in the intermediate stages of composition, where the "expressive" intent dominated Joyce's work on the episode.

The tendency of these intermediate revisions is clearly evident in a later (1927-28) version of our passage:

And what was the wyerye rima she made! O that! Tell me the trent of it while I'm lathering hail out of Denis Florence MacCarthy's combies. I'm dying down off my iodine feet until I hear Anna Livia's cushingloo! I can see that, I see you are. How does it tummel? Listen now. Are you listening? Yes, yes! Idneed I am! Tarn your ore ouse. Essonne inne.

By this version "rhyme" has become the Italian "rima," "hell" has been altered to "hail," the "Id" has appeared in "indeed," and two more river-names have been introduced: the Trent and the Tummel. More spectacularly, the innocuous ending of the earlier version ("Listen now. Listen in:") has become "Tarn your ore ouse. Esonne inne." Although the voice of the washerwoman is still audible in this transformed ending ("Turn your ear here. Listen in.") the emphasis is now on the water-allusions—a "tarn," the Ouse rivers of England, the Esonne river of France, the Inn river of central Europe, and the Öre Sound of Denmark ("öre" is also the Danish for "ear," and Joyce originally wrote "ear," only changing it to "ore" when the functional word-play became evident).

The "expressive" intent is even more obvious in the 1930 version of the passage:

And what was the wyerye rima she made! Odet! Odet! Tell me the trent of it while I'm lathering hail out of Denis Florence MacCarthy's combies. Rise it, flut ye, pian piena! I'm dying down off my iodine feet until I lerryn Anna Livia's cushingloo! I can see that, I see you are. How does it tummel? Listen now. Are you listening? Yes, yes! Idneed I am! Tarn your ore ouse. Esonne inne.

Here we have three more additions. "Oder! Oder!" fuses the original meaning ("O that!") with "ode," "Odette," and the Oder river. "Rise it, flut ye, pian piena!" combines the Italian word for "flood" (*piena*), a type of vessel (flute), and a Russian river (the Piana) with two musical references: the flute, and the Italian admonition *pian piano* ("softly, gently"). "Lerry'n" suggests, among other things, the French river Lers. With these additions the second major period of revision comes to an end; by 1930 Joyce had endowed the text of *Anna Livia* with as many river-allusions as it could bear. His final work on *Anna Livia* was aimed at strengthening the episode's connections with other parts of the *Wake*. It was to this end that Joyce, in his last revision of our passage, inserted the following jingle after "Anna Livia's cushingloo," thus producing the final version found on pp. 200-201 of *Finnegans Wake*:

that was writ by one and rede by two and trouved by a poule in the parco!

In this addition the "expressive" aim is still evident: "poule" is a reminder of "pool," and "parco" suggests the Pardo river of Brazil. However, the main purpose of the insertion is to connect Anna Livia's "rhyme" with the letter which was "writ by one" (ALP), "rede by two" (Shem and Shaun), and found by a hen in the Park (see *FW* 93-94, 104 ff.). Thus Joyce's final elaboration of the passage, like most of his late revisions, was part of an attempt to sew the *Wake* together from the inside.

With the development of this short passage in mind, we are now in a position to assess the nature of Joyce's revisions and their value to a reader of the *Wake*. First it must be acknowledged that there is nothing but disappointment in store for those readers who would use the early versions as a "skeleton key" to the *Wake*'s meaning. True, the basic "narrative" movement of a passage is often clearer in the early versions than in the finished text; but it is also true that this basic "narrative" is usually flat and dull, having only a tangential relation to the real life of the *Wake*. For better or for worse, the life of *Finnegans Wake* lies on the surface, in the countless analogies and word-fusions which were the result of Joyce's painstaking revisions. In his search for simultaneity of effect Joyce transformed the original "narrative" units into something rich and strange, and consequently the drafts of *Finnegans Wake* will yield little but frustration to those readers who ransack them in search of "clues" to the work's meaning. No clues are needed, for the conventional "meaning" can be (and has been by many critics) simply and convincingly stated. But there is another dimension of the *Wake* which is far more important, and here the revisions are often a useful guide. To borrow Professor Higginson's phrase, *Finnegans Wake* is a book of "synthetic becoming," and the process of reading the *Wake*, the process of grasping the analogies and word-play, corresponds to the process Joyce followed in making the book. To read the *Wake* properly is, in a sense, to re-enact the process of composition, and therefore a study of the book's evolution can sharpen our perceptions and initiate us into the special techniques of reading demanded by Joyce's baffling creation.

But Professor Higginson's record of *Anna Livia*'s evolution provides more than a lesson in "How to Read"; it is also a laboratory for those who are interested

in the creative imagination, and it illuminates much that has happened in our literature during the past fifty years. For in his last work Joyce pushed many of the methods and assumptions of modern literature to their logical extremes, thereby focusing our attention on general problems which extend beyond the complexities of his own language. *Finnegans Wake* culminates two generations of symboliste experiment, and is our literature's most ambitious attempt to approximate the "condition of music." Thus Professor Higginson's edition provides a basis for judging not only the defects and virtues of Joyce's final achievement, but also the defects and virtues of certain aesthetic assumptions which underlie much of modern literature.

WALTON LITZ

Princeton University

*Reflections on a Literary Revolution* by Graham Hough. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1960. Pp. vi + 128. \$2.95.

While it is impossible to read Graham Hough's criticism without respect, it has also become increasingly difficult to read it without misgivings regarding its directions and now, even, its position. Since his first book, *The Last Romantics*, he has been continually less able to follow his own perceptions wherever they might lead him, and has sought, instead, security in dogmatic placebos. Now, in *Reflections on a Literary Revolution*, he argues that because twentieth-century literature "was not the vehicle of a great spiritual force," it is sterile and self-destructive.

Fundamentally, he insists upon three propositions: first, that "Imagist ideas are at the center of the characteristic poetic procedures of our time"; second, that the Pound-Eliot mode epitomizes the tenets of Imagism, and so embodies the vital poetry of "modernism"; and third, that because of the special emphases of Imagist theory, our poets have alienated their audience by abandoning the "ordinary modes of rational communication." We can consider these claims in turn. Because all are entailed rather by Hough's assumptions than by the facts of the matter, all simplify and hence falsify the tendencies of twentieth-century literature.

Hough defines the "image" as the symbol stripped of its transcendentalism, and made opaque by a "defiant insistence on the surface of things, and an insistence that the surface of things is all." Imagism therefore projects a reality in which neither feelings nor ideas have a place, a world of exteriors. Modern literature, Hough laments, has as a result degenerated into formal experiment and technical innovation. Pound's ideogram, Joyce's epiphany, Eliot's objective correlative, the *Cantos*, *Finnegans Wake*, *The Waste Land*—these are the eponyms of modernism, all traceable, in esse, to Imagism. Because of their emphasis upon the hard and clear detail, and therefore upon technique, the Imagists (Hough contends) left no legacy to the future, but only autonomous examples of "inimitable and unrepeatable" innovations.

Surely, however, the rendition of surfaces for their own sake has been neither the primary nor the most fruitful impulse of this century. To be sure, W. C.

Williams and others claim to investigate "no ideas but in things"; Hart Crane argued in his essay on "Modern Poetry" that the poet must "absorb the machine"; and Hemingway works on the surface of dry, cheerless fact. But in every case, the artist's concern is not with the surface itself, but with his absorption of what is *in* things; or, as Hemingway put it, with "the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion." It is with the inner self which the surface may evoke and thus bring into being. Not until recently, in the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet (for instance, in *La Voyeur*), has the idea of *profondeur* been questioned and surfaces rendered, as Grillet says, "without trying to penetrate them, since there is nothing inside." While the literature of *le parti-pris des choses*, then, may be Imagist doctrine *in extremis*, the two are certainly not identical. At its best, the one distills quintessences—"wie selber die Dinge niemals innig meinten zu sein," Rilke phrased it—while the other simply reconstructs the exteriority and independence of objects as demonstrations of acute observation. Twentieth-century conditions have enormously expanded our sensitivity to exteriors, in art as well as in life; only that criticism will be valuable which differentiates between the *uses* made of this sensibility by various poets.

I take it that thereby we might distinguish several basic modes among modern poets. Only their common effort to maintain a sense of the individuated ego against collective pressures unites our poets. As we can now see, Eliot and Pound defined the ego through the culture, or more precisely the historical continuity, which alone (they believed) might give it meaning. Only by surrendering himself to some form more valuable than his own personality—namely Tradition—could the poet assert and assess his own value. A simple case of this is "Animula," whose final line imposes an order, and therefore an ironic kind of excellence, upon otherwise futile lives. Both *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos* likewise depend for their effect upon a contraction of time and space in which images signifying an ordered tradition are experienced simultaneously with the fragmentary surfaces of a chaotic, valueless present. Since the exterior principle of this poetry is incoherence, the annotations become, as synchronous clarifications, a necessary part of the structure; Gide, for instance, originally intended to incorporate his *Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs* into the novel itself; Joyce provided a guide to *Ulysses* by proxy. And Pound wrote of the *Cantos* in 1939: "Wait till I get 'em written and then if it don't show I will start exegesis." The poet has become, in Arnold's sense, the man of culture as his only way of remaining man.

But of course there have been other, quite different, ways of *using* the image. Poets as dissimilar as Marianne Moore and Dylan Thomas, for example, delimit the self by the discrepancy between image and form. Characteristically, Miss Moore stresses the perfection of her form by carefully pointing out the unimportance of her subject matter; and Thomas, arguing that "the more subjective a poem, the clearer its verse line," emphasized his inward order through his outward violence. Williams, the early Stevens, and Theodore Roethke define the ego by what it can perceive; what is "in things," ultimately, is the self which through them can explore its own becomingness. Conrad Aiken, too, has attempted to reveal the poet-person in the "crystal" moment when his ego can find its means of expression. For all of these poets surfaces are transparent openings to a self defined not by the order in which it can be placed, but by the order which it can make.

Hough's misunderstanding of the nature and uses of communication in poetry derives from the attitude of critical realism which he assumes. He is at his best in exposing the defects of contemporary analytical and historical criticism. But his strictures divide him against himself; he surrenders the historical awareness which enriched his own first book and attempts to argue as if he were "an intelligent person who [not only] knows nothing about twentieth-century poetry," but is also "innocent of the spirit of our age." Armed with his chimerical naïveté, he argues that the "natural community of understanding between poet and reader has been lost." How, from his *tabula rasa*, could he decide otherwise? For art, as Erich Kahler has wisely observed, "advances along the foremost front of what can be expressed." And as our awareness of reality increases, our art must become more subtle—and therefore, in Hough's sense, less "real." New penetrations by the human and natural sciences into the nature of existence—the discovery of physicists, for example, that motion is indeterminable, that time flows inequably—have invalidated our "common sense" reality. Physics may discover, but art alone can make a new sense of reality a part of our consciousness—and only by creating a deeper mode of expression for it. Now, as always, art leads in the evolution of human awareness, in man's capacity to feel, perceive, and understand. The poet literally *creates* our reality for us: in arranging his words he arranges our world. Those, like Hough, who pander art to the "common reader," who advocate literary nationalism, and decry "empty" technique, would effect, in short, the annihilation of man himself, by removing the only means whereby he can evolve. As for them, we have been there. Our poetry will take us where we are going.

JAY MARTIN

*Yale University*

## THE COLORADO QUARTERLY

*Published by the University of Colorado*

The *Quarterly*, now in its ninth year, is a magazine of regional and national scope designed to appeal to the general reader. In addition to fiction and poetry, each issue features an exceptionally diversified selection of provocative articles written in non-technical style by specialists in all fields.

Representative articles which have been reprinted in *Best Articles & Stories* are:

Latin American Democracy.....	Gonzalo J. Facio
The Radiation Danger.....	H. J. Muller
The Conflict of Values.....	C. E. Ayres
American Literature in China.....	Katherine C. Turner
Whither, O Avantgarde?.....	Donald Sutherland
The Two Faces of Germany.....	Gerhard Loose
Higher Education Viewed with Alarm.....	Allan R. Richards
Recollections of Albert Einstein.....	Bruno Eisner
James Gould Cozens and the Genteel Tradition..	Harold H. Watts

FOUR ISSUES: \$3.00

*Address: The Colorado Quarterly, Hellems 118, University of Colorado,  
Boulder, Colorado*

## BOOKS ABROAD

An International Quarterly of Comment on Foreign Books

*Edited by W. B. Fleischmann*

*Founded by Roy Temple House*

WORLD LITERATURE in review each quarter by distinguished critics both in the United States and abroad. The magazine offers its readers criticism and analysis of many of the important books issued in all literary languages—a literary harvest obtainable through no other medium.

THE CURRENT OF IDEAS as reflected in leading articles by contributors of established reputation throughout the world. This makes vital reading for everyone interested in the intellectual advancement of our age.

Subscription rates: \$4.00 a year, or \$7.00 for two years. Single copies, \$1.25 each. Address the Circulation Manager, BOOKS ABROAD.

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS

Norman • Oklahoma